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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"; current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls

Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is a review and appraisal of the progress made in national level implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by Member States at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000. It covers the two themes mandated in the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women for its forty-ninth session: "Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third

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* E/CN.6/2005/1.

special session" and "Current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls". The report is based on responses to a questionnaire and other information provided by Member States. It consists of five parts: part one provides an introduction; part two outlines overall major trends in achievements and obstacles and challenges; part three covers achievements, obstacles and challenges in relation to the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the Platform for Action as well as issues identified at the twenty-third special session; part four provides an overview of progress in institutional arrangements; and part five presents the priority areas and future actions identified by Member States.

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
	Part One Introduction	1–40	5
I.	Mandate	3–11	5
II.	Regional review and appraisal processes	12–18	7
III.	Context of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	19	8
IV.	Intergovernmental follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women	20–40	8
	Part Two Overview of major trends in implementation	41–81	14
I.	Introduction	41–46	14
II.	Achievements	47–68	15
III.	Obstacles and challenges	69–76	19
IV.	Conclusions	77–81	20
	Part Three Critical areas of concern and other issues*	82–669	22
I.	Critical areas of concern	82–497	22
	A. Women and poverty	82–118	22
	B. Education and training of women	119–150	28
	C. Women and health	151–193	33
	D. Violence against women	194–240	40
	E. Women and armed conflict	241–277	48
	F. Women and the economy	278–322	55
	G. Women in power and decision-making	323–354	62
	I. Human rights of women	355–406	67
	J. Women and the media	407–428	76
	K. Women and the environment	429–460	80
	L. The girl child	461–497	85
II.	Other issues	498–669	91
	A. Trafficking in women and girls	498–538	91
	B. Women and HIV/AIDS	539–571	98
	C. Indigenous women	572–595	103
	D. Information and communication technologies	596–624	108

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* Critical area of concern H, Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, is examined in part four.

E. Millennium Development Goals 625–652
F. Men and boys 653–669
Part Four
Institutional arrangements and mechanisms for the advancement of women 670–737
I. Introduction 670–681
II. Achievements 682–723
III. Obstacles and challenges 724–731
IV. Conclusions 732–737
Part Five
Priority areas for future action 738–795
I. Overview 738–782
II. Other issues 783–795

Annexes

I. Replies to the questionnaire received by the Secretariat in 2004 ....
II. Regional distribution rates of responses to the questionnaire ....

Part One
Introduction

> **"We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as Governments to implement the following Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all our policies and programmes. We urge the United Nations system, regional and international financial institutions, other relevant regional and international institutions and all women and men, as well as non-governmental organizations, with full respect for their autonomy, and all sectors of civil society, in cooperation with Governments, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of this Platform for Action."**
> **Beijing Declaration (para. 38)**
>
> **"*We the Governments, at the beginning of the new millennium,***
>
> **"*Reaffirm* our commitment to overcoming obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and to strengthening and safeguarding a national and international enabling environment, and to this end pledge to undertake further action to ensure their full and accelerated implementation, inter alia, through the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes and promoting full participation and empowerment of women and enhanced international cooperation for the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action."**
> **Political declaration adopted at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (para. 8)**

1. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted by 189 Member States of the United Nations in 1995.[1] The Platform for Action is a global agenda for women's human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women, developed through a process of dialogue and exchange within and among Governments, international organizations, including the United Nations, and civil society. The Platform for Action builds on commitments made at the United Nations world conferences on women held in Mexico in 1975,[2] Copenhagen in 1980,[3] and Nairobi in 1985,[4] as well as other commitments made at the United Nations global summits and conferences in the 1990s.[5]

2. The General Assembly conducted a five-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The twenty-third special session entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", took place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 5 to 9 June 2000.

I. Mandate

3. At its twenty-third special session of the General Assembly adopted a political declaration[6] and an outcome document, entitled: "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action."[7] Governments recommitted themselves to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and also agreed on further actions and initiatives to advance the promotion of gender equality at local, national, regional and global levels.

4. In the political declaration,[8] Governments agreed "to assess regularly further implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action with a view to bringing together all parties involved in 2005 to assess progress and consider new initiatives, as appropriate, 10 years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and twenty years after the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women".

5. In keeping with the political declaration, the Commission on the Status of Women, in its multi-year programme of work for 2002 to 2006, identified as its two thematic issues for 2005: "Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled 'Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century'"; and "Current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls".[9]

6. In 2003, the General Assembly stressed that reviews and appraisals of the major United Nations conferences and summits should assess the progress made in the implementation of commitments and provide the occasion to reaffirm the goals and objectives agreed upon at those conferences and summits, share best practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and initiatives to overcome them and important measures for the further implementation of their programmes of action, as well as new challenges and emerging issues.[10]

7. In the context of the two themes for 2005 identified in the long-term programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women, a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session will take place at the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which will be held from 28 February to 11 March 2005. The Commission will commemorate not only the 10-year anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action but also the 30-year anniversary of the First World Conference on Women, held in Mexico in 1975. The review and appraisal will provide an opportunity for Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the goal of gender equality and the strategies of gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. The Commission on the Status of Women will focus on national level implementation. A number of interactive events, with high-level representation, are planned for the session to facilitate exchange of national experiences and good practices.

8. Underlining the significance of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council decided that the Commission should convene a high-level plenary meeting, open to the participation of all Member States and Observers, on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session. The Council also requested the Chairperson of the forty-ninth session of the Commission to transmit its outcome, through the Council, to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, including to the high-level event of the General Assembly on the review of the Millennium Declaration.[11]

9. In its resolution 59/168 of 20 December 2004, the General Assembly underlined the significance of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which will mark the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the fifth anniversary of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, at which the Commission will review the implementation

of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly and consider the current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women, as well as the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General.

10. In October 2003, the United Nations Secretariat submitted a questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session to all Member States and Observer States. The General Assembly subsequently invited Member States to submit their responses to the questionnaire, to be used in preparing for the review and appraisal mandated in the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on the Status of Women.[12] By 31 October 2004, 134 Member States and one Observer State had responded to the questionnaire.[13]

11. The present report responds to those mandates and provides a review and appraisal of the progress made in national level implementation of the Platform for Action. It also reviews implementation of the outcome of the twenty-third special session. The report consists of five parts. The introduction in part one provides background on the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session, as well as an overview of the contributions of other relevant intergovernmental processes since 1995. Part two gives an overview of major trends in national level implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the special session, including achievements, gaps, challenges and lessons learned. Part three consists of an analysis of implementation, including both achievements and challenges, in each of the critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action as well as a number of major issues identified in the special session. Part four outlines institutional arrangements, such as national mechanisms, gender mainstreaming, capacity-building, statistics and indicators and key partnerships. Part five highlights remaining major challenges and priority areas for future action identified by Member States to ensure full implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session.

II. Regional review and appraisal processes

12. Prior to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, regional action plans were adopted by all five regional commissions of the United Nations.[14] In the context of the five-year review of implementation of the Platform for Action in 2000, each region conducted a review and appraisal.[15]

13. In preparation for the 10-year review and appraisal at the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, all five commissions held intergovernmental regional meetings. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) held meetings in all regions in conjunction with those organized by the commissions. NGOs also participated actively in the intergovernmental regional meetings.

14. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) held the ninth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean from 10 to 12 June 2004 in Mexico City. The Conference analysed two central themes of strategic importance to the region, poverty, economic autonomy and gender equality; and empowerment, political participation and institution-building, and adopted the Mexico City Consensus.

15. In Beirut, from 8 to 10 July 2004, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) hosted the Arab regional conference entitled "Ten Years after Beijing: Call for Peace". The conference adopted the Beirut Declaration, which outlines actions over the next decade to empower women, improve their living and working conditions and increase their participation in political, economic and social life.

16. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) hosted the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its Regional and Global Outcomes from 7 to 10 September 2004, in Bangkok. The Bangkok Communiqué sets out gains made over the past 10 years, identifies gaps and recognizes challenges that lie ahead for the region.

17. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) undertook its review from 12 to 14 October 2004, during the seventh African Regional Conference on Women, held in Addis Ababa. In the outcome document of the Conference, it was noted that, in order to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, it will be necessary to institutionalize gender mainstreaming through the provision of adequate resources and technical expertise and the delegation of sufficient authority to those responsible for implementation.

18. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) will hold its regional preparatory meeting for the 10-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action from 14 to 15 December 2004 in Geneva. The main themes will be: women in the economy; institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality; trafficking of women in the context of migratory movements; and emerging issues.

III. Context of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

19. The first United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Mexico City in 1975, led to the establishment of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976-1985). The World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in Copenhagen in 1980, adopted a Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women,[16] while the third conference, hosted by Kenya in 1985, adopted the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000.[17] The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, identified 12 strategic objectives for action. Governments were accorded primary responsibility for implementation, including through the creation of an enabling policy environment.

IV. Intergovernmental follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

20. The General Assembly endorsed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and established a three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism, consisting of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women, to play the primary role in overall policy-making and follow-up, and in coordinating the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action.

A. General Assembly

21. In its follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, the General Assembly continued to promote gender equality both as an end in itself and a means to the realization of the goals of other global conferences. To that end, the Assembly has directed all of its committees and bodies to mainstream gender equality perspectives in their work.[18] It has also drawn the attention of other bodies of the United Nations system to the gender mainstreaming strategy and its practical implications for normative and policy developments and operational activities in all areas of the work of the United Nations, including macroeconomic policy formulation, poverty eradication, human rights, humanitarian assistance, disarmament and peace.

22. Over the past decade, attention to gender perspectives in the main committees of the General Assembly has increased, particularly in the Third Committee. Through the Third Committee, the Assembly considers follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women on an annual basis, supported by reports provided by the Secretary-General.[19]

23. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provided a strong framework for mainstreaming gender equality perspectives into the agendas of the conferences and special sessions of the General Assembly that followed the Fourth World Conference on Women.[20]

24. In September 2000, the General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration[21] which recognized that the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women are critical to the eradication of poverty, hunger and disease and the achievement of development that is truly sustainable. It resolved to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Subsequently, eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established. Goal 3 focuses on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is, however, increasingly recognized that gender equality is essential for the achievement of all the MDGs and efforts are being made to incorporate gender perspectives in the implementation of the goals at the global, regional and national levels. While the overall global framework for gender equality and empowerment of women remains the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session, the MDGs are an instrument to support its full implementation. The MDGs represent an important opportunity for increasing the focus on national level implementation and measuring progress and outcomes.

B. Economic and Social Council

25. The functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, and the Council itself have paid greater attention to gender equality both as a goal in itself and as an instrument to achieve sectoral objectives, and have taken steps to promote and monitor the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session, including through mainstreaming gender equality perspectives in their work. As recommended by the Platform for Action, the Council considers the advancement and empowerment of women and implementation of the Platform for Action at each of its main segments. The Council, in exercising its overall coordination and management role, especially with

regard to coordinated and integrated follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits, has provided clear guidance with respect to achieving the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session.

26. At the coordination segment for the Council's substantive session of 1997, the Council considered the question of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. Its agreed conclusions 1997/2 provided the definition and principles of gender mainstreaming and outlined institutional requirements, including recommendations concerning the role of gender specialists and capacity-building, and highlighted the importance of gender mainstreaming in the integrated follow-up to United Nations conferences.

27. In 2004, the coordination segment of the Council focused on the "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system". The Council adopted resolution 2004/4, which reaffirmed that gender mainstreaming constituted a major strategy for the full implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session, as a complement to strategies for women's empowerment.

C. Commission on the Status of Women

28. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1996/6, confirmed the existing mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women, and expanded it to include monitoring, reviewing and appraising progress achieved and problems encountered in the implementation of the Platform for Action at all levels. The Commission was urged to play a catalytic role in relation to gender mainstreaming in United Nations activities.

29. In 1996, the Economic and Social Council decided on a multi-year programme of work for the Commission on the Status of Women for 1997 to 2000, providing the basis for a systematic review of progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third Special Session.[22] In 2000, the Commission acted as the Preparatory Commission for the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. In 2001, the Council adopted a multi-year programme of work for the Commission for the period from 2002 to 2006. The programme was intended to provide a framework to assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session, which would be in line with the coordinated follow-up to major forthcoming United Nations conferences and summits.[23] Since 1996, under its programmes of work, the Commission on the Status of Women reviewed each of the 12 critical areas of concern, making recommendations on concrete measures to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action.[24]

30. The Commission on the Status of Women enhanced its own methods of work to monitor the implementation of the Platform for Action more effectively. Since 1996, it has invited experts to participate in the substantive debates on the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern. The results of these dialogues were normally reflected in action-oriented agreed conclusions prepared by the Commission on the Status of Women, which, from 1997, were adopted as resolutions of the Economic and Social Council. From the Commission's fortieth to

forty-eighth sessions, a total of 24 panel discussions were convened. At its forty-sixth session, the Commission decided to increase opportunities for sharing national experiences and good practice on implementation by introducing the option of high-level round tables. Two such high-level round tables were held in 2003 and 2004.

31. The Commission on the Status of Women has further developed its catalytic role in support of gender mainstreaming. For example, the schedule for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action took into account follow-up processes for other conferences.[25] This increased the potential for increased gender mainstreaming in these processes. It has also made available the outcome of its work to other functional commissions, including by forwarding its agreed conclusions 1997/1 on women and the environment[26] to the Commission on Sustainable Development acting as preparatory body for the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21. It provided its agreed conclusions on human rights of women, women and armed conflict and violence against women[27] to the Commission on Human Rights in 1998 as input into its follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. For the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Commission forwarded its agreed conclusions on environmental management and the mitigation of natural disasters.[28] In 2003, it provided its agreed conclusions on participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women[29] to the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Geneva.

32. A major achievement of the Commission on the Status of Women was the elaboration of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,[30] which was adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session and had been ratified by 69 States parties as of November 2004.

D. Other functional commissions

33. Since the adoption of Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming, the functional commissions have included gender perspectives more visibly in their work. The Commission for Social Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development have made efforts to consider gender perspectives as an integrated component of their work programmes. The Commission on Human Rights has integrated gender perspectives into its work, both under a separate agenda item and by taking gender issues into account in its thematic and country resolutions.[31] The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice adopted a decision in 1998 to mainstream gender perspectives in its work.[32] At its ninth session in 2001, the Commission on Sustainable Development called upon Governments to strengthen the role of major groups, including women, through participation in decision-making.[33] The Commission on Population and Development at its thirty-fifth session in 2002, adopted a resolution on the theme of reproductive rights and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS, which reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session, in particular those recommendations relating to reproductive rights and reproductive health.[34]

E. Security Council

34. In October 2000, following an open debate on women and peace and security, the Security Council adopted a path-breaking resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. The resolution highlighted the importance of bringing gender perspectives to the centre of attention in all United Nations peacemaking, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts and provided a number of important operational mandates, with implications for both individual Member States and the United Nations system. In the open debates of the Security Council to commemorate the anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in 2001 and 2002, the support for increased attention to gender perspectives in peace and security work of the United Nations was reiterated in two presidential statements.[35] In October 2002, the report of the Secretary-General[36] called for in resolution 1325 (2000) was presented to the Security Council. The report was based on the Secretary-General's study on women and peace and security.

35. The resolution has provided an important framework for action on gender mainstreaming in the areas of peace and security for other intergovernmental bodies, United Nations entities and NGOs. The Security Council has increasingly addressed gender perspectives in its missions, including through consultations with local women's groups, briefings on gender issues to the missions, the preparation of checklists relating to the inclusion of gender perspectives and the participation of gender advisers.

36. In an open debate in the Security Council on 28 October 2004, the representatives of 50 Member States, including all members of the Security Council, expressed concern at the continuing violence against women in armed conflict and its aftermath and called for greater attention to gender perspectives in all areas of the work of the United Nations on peace and security. They recognized women's critical role in preventing conflict, building peace and promoting sustainable development in post-conflict situations and called for greater representation of women in peacekeeping forces and police and, in particular, in decision-making positions in all areas, especially as special representatives of the Secretary-General and deputy special representatives of the Secretary-General. A presidential statement was adopted at the open debate[37] to further implementation of the resolution.

F. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and other human rights treaty bodies[38]

37. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in implementing its responsibilities under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, now regularly takes into account the Platform for Action when considering reports submitted by States parties. Following the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Committee revised its guidelines for the preparation of reports by States parties in 1996, inviting them to take into account the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action and noting that those concerns were compatible with the articles of the Convention and therefore within the mandate of the Committee. The Committee further revised these guidelines in 2002, emphasizing that initial and subsequent periodic reports should contain information on the implementation of the actions proposed in the Platform

for Action as well as in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session (General Assembly resolution S-23/3). States parties generally refer to their activities in relation to the Platform either in their reports, or in their presentations to the Committee.

38. The Committee regularly raises implementation of the Platform for Action in its constructive dialogue with States parties. In all its concluding comments, the Committee consistently requests States parties to widely disseminate the Platform and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session, together with the Convention, its Optional Protocol and the Committee's general recommendations.

39. Following the recommendation contained in the Platform for Action that the Committee's ability to monitor implementation should be strengthened, the General Assembly, in 1996, approved the Committee's request for additional meeting time.[39] As a result, starting in 1997, the Committee has held two annual sessions of three weeks each, each preceded by a one-week pre-session working group to prepare the lists of issues and questions for the constructive dialogue with the reporting States. The General Assembly authorized an exceptional (third) session to take place in 2002[40] in order to reduce the backlog of reports awaiting consideration. In the light of the expansion in its workload resulting from the increased number of ratifications of the Convention, improvements in timely reporting by States parties and its responsibilities under the Optional Protocol, the Committee sought authorization from the Assembly, in July 2004, for an additional week of meeting time for its thirty-third, thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth sessions, and for three annual sessions of three weeks each, with a one-week pre-sessional working group for each session, effective from January 2007.

40. The Committee has significantly enhanced its coordination with other human rights treaty bodies. The Committee's Chairperson regularly participates in the annual meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies and representatives of the Committee have participated in the inter-Committee meetings since their inception in 2002. These meetings serve to enhance coordination and cooperation among the treaty bodies on working methods and other issues falling within the mandates of the Committees.

Part Two
Overview of major trends in implementation

I. Introduction

41. Governments provided information on the major achievements in implementation over the past decade, highlighting legislative change, policy reforms and institutional and programme development and identifying remaining key gaps and challenges. The vast majority of countries noted the importance or continuing relevance of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session and stated that they remained committed to their full implementation. Several Governments stressed that the review process in 2000 had accelerated national action for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Responses indicated increased awareness of gender equality among Governments and the different parts of society.

42. The linkages between the Platform for Action, the outcome document of the special session and other international commitments, in particular the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals were recognized by many Governments. Many also highlighted the importance of regional processes and instruments for ensuring commitment to gender equality. International and regional commitments had influenced national policy frameworks, gender mainstreaming approaches, national plans and programmes of action, sectoral policies and programmes, and legislation. A few countries specifically noted the contributions they had made to the integration of gender equality into international and regional processes, such as the outcomes of major conferences or summits and resolutions of the General Assembly and other intergovernmental bodies.

43. Many Governments recognized both the positive and negative impacts of major global and regional trends, such as globalization, trade liberalization and privatization as well as the development of information and communication technologies (ICT), on the situation of women and gender equality. Positive impacts included greater participation of women in public life, especially in the economy, including as migrants, and access to knowledge. Negative impacts included increased poverty, particularly in rural areas, decreased social protection and basic services, increased violence against women, including in situations of armed conflict, decreased participation of women in political decision-making and a digital divide between women and men. National or regional political developments, such as government changes or crises, had also influenced the social and economic situation of women.

44. A number of Governments emphasized that promotion of gender equality required a more comprehensive approach to the design of policies, programmes and legislation on gender equality and support for institutional developments. Such an approach addressed gender equality as an integral part of sustainable human development and acknowledged the contribution of women to national development.

45. Several Governments noted that greater attention was being given to the needs of groups of women facing multiple discrimination, including women from rural areas, ethnic minority and indigenous women, older and young women, migrant and immigrant women, refugee and internally displaced women, women affected by armed conflict, disabled women and homosexual women.

46. The importance of partnerships was acknowledged by many Governments, for example: between governments and civil society; between women and men and girls and boys; among government institutions; and between countries. They recognized the role of NGOs in awareness-raising, outreach and advocacy and in direct intervention and service delivery. Governments worked with civil society and NGOs in policy, strategy and programme development, as well as in legislation and institution-building. NGOs increasingly took part in the implementation of programmes. Governments promoted NGO development and activities, for example through funding and capacity-building programmes.

II. Achievements

47. While all Governments described actions taken since 1995, most reported significant but uneven national achievements in relation to the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Most recorded achievements in developing policies, operational programmes, legislation and institutional frameworks in support of gender equality. In all regions, some gains had been seen in terms of improvements in education, poverty reduction, women's health and social and legal status and participation and representation of women in public life. Progress had also been made in resource allocations and capacity-building, including training, and research and statistics and data collection.

48. All Governments had adopted, reviewed, revised and implemented policies and programmes, and some reported that their main achievements were in these areas. Since 1995, the majority of Governments had adopted an approach of promotion of gender equality, and many now also use the gender mainstreaming strategy, especially since 2000. At the same time, all Governments continued to implement targeted policies and programmes for the advancement and empowerment of women, addressing persistent gaps, inequalities and discrimination and providing equal opportunities. Some Governments specifically noted the continuing relevance and importance of this dual approach.

49. Many policy and strategy frameworks strengthened the gender equality and mainstreaming approach. Action plans accompanied many of these policies and strategies. A number of donor countries reviewed their national development cooperation policies and strategies to include a gender equality focus and strengthen mainstreaming activities since 1995.

50. In addition to elaborating specific policies, strategies and action plans on gender equality, many Governments integrated gender perspectives either into national or sectoral development policies and programmes. A number of developing countries prepared national poverty reduction policies and frameworks, including poverty reduction strategy papers, which addressed a variety of social and economic issues. Some integrated gender perspectives and also targeted certain groups of women for specific attention. Some Governments incorporated gender perspectives in policies, action plans and programmes for sustainable development.

51. Many Governments welcomed the increased participation of women in the economy and acted, or encouraged employers to act, to support gender equality. A number of Governments had adopted comprehensive national employment strategies and endeavoured to minimize horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market. Many Governments, especially in developing countries, had implemented

employment creation schemes in different sectors, as well as microcredit and small business schemes, sometimes as part of gender-sensitive poverty alleviation policies and programmes. Several Governments reported achievements in new economic sectors, such as an increase in women's access and use of ICT and the employment of women in the information sector.

52. Governments also reported gains in eliminating discrimination and enhancing women's equality in the social and employment fields, for example: improved income security; paid or unpaid parental and sick leave, including opportunities for paternity leave, and childcare benefits. Initiatives also aimed to improve reconciliation and balance between work and family life.

53. Many Governments noted achievements in women's health, including women's reproductive health. Governments acted to reduce maternal mortality, for example among teenage mothers. Several countries advanced measures against harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting, including training and awareness-raising in the framework of health programmes.

54. Many Governments reported achievements in the area of education. These included the incorporation of gender perspectives in education policies and programmes and the introduction of specific programmes for girls' education, including in rural areas or for indigenous populations. Several countries enhanced adult literacy and legal literacy for women. Countries also reported improved school attendance by women and young girls, reduced drop-out rates and measures that enabled teenage mothers or pregnant girls to attend school.

55. Progress was also made in combating stereotypes in education through the use of non-sexist language by education staff; the revision of textbooks and educational materials; gender-awareness training of all staff; and requirements for gender-based competencies. Governments had encouraged girls to choose studies in science and engineering, ensuring that human rights education included attention to the human rights of women.

56. Violence against women in all its forms, in particular domestic violence, has become a priority area in the legislation and policy and programme development of Governments in all regions. Comprehensive approaches to combat this scourge included legislative changes, the adoption of action plans, support measures for victims, awareness-raising, education and sensitization measures, training and capacity-building and the prosecution, punishment and rehabilitation of offenders. Prevention measures have also been implemented, including for vulnerable groups of women. Increasingly, focus is being placed on the role of men and boys in preventing violence and abuse. Several Governments provided examples of their efforts to fight trafficking in women, including campaigns against trafficking and subregional and cross-border cooperation.

57. Many Governments, in particular in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Eastern Europe and countries with economies in transition, identified HIV/AIDS as one of the priority areas of attention, including the pandemic's consequences for social, economic, education, health systems and family structures and its impact on national and regional development. Governments reported on efforts to enhance counselling, treatment and care for patients as well as to provide information, awareness-raising and prevention services for the public in general, and for vulnerable groups in particular, including girls and women.

58. Some Governments highlighted their efforts to influence attitudes and to change behaviour through measures such as public information, communication and awareness-raising activities. They endeavoured to increase the positive role of the media and journalists in eliminating gender stereotypes and supported the work of civil society in this area.

59. The role of women in peace and security has gained prominence, and a number of Governments placed special emphasis on the protection of women during or after conflict. They supported women's participation in peace processes, including funding for initiatives at home or abroad. Some countries took steps to protect asylum-seekers and refugee and internally displaced women. Several Governments from regions as diverse as Central America, the Caucasus region of Eastern Europe and the Mano River, Great Lakes and Southern Saharan regions in Africa noted the increased contribution of women to peacebuilding and national reconstruction over the past 10 years.

60. Many Governments mentioned as major achievements their adherence to international and regional instruments on the protection and promotion of the human rights of women, with a large number of countries specifically mentioning their ratification or accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as a major national achievement. Several Governments highlighted the withdrawal of their reservations to the Convention. A few Governments also reported on efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into the monitoring and reporting processes under international human rights instruments.

61. Several countries from the Latin American region cited as a major achievement the ratification of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), while countries from all regions reported on their adherence to the "Palermo Protocol" to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Governments also noted their commitment to other international instruments, such as conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and its provisions on conflict-related abuses and gender-based violence against women.

62. Governments drew attention to the significant impact of the Convention in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the special session in all areas. This impact included: the elaboration of policies; the establishment of institutions; and constitutional and legislative improvements in many areas, including marriage, family and personal status laws, civil and penal codes, labour, employment and commercial laws and nationality, citizenship and electoral laws. It also facilitated adoption of temporary special measures and affirmative action and measures to ensure protection from violence. Legislative measures varied greatly from country to country and were aimed at the elimination of discriminatory provisions, establishment or strengthening of protection and redress mechanisms as well as establishment of a gender-sensitive legal environment.

63. A number of Governments mentioned the improvement in the representation of women in the public sector, including the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, over the past 10 years as an achievement. Many Member States adopted policies and legislation on affirmative action to increase the participation and

representation of women in the public sector, including in decision-making positions. Several member States of the European Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) noted the influence of regional processes, for example on women's participation in political decision-making, where the SADC target was 30 per cent by 2005. Several countries set targets or quotas for women, mainly in the public sector, in particular in the civil service and elected bodies, including at municipal level. Several Governments supported the introduction of targets and quotas for elections and in political parties.

64. Most Governments noted the critical importance of institutional developments for the full achievement of the empowerment of women and gender equality. They reported action to ensure that institutional frameworks supported policies, programmes and legislation, which included setting up national machineries; funding frameworks; monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; and capacity-building. Governments also reported on the participation and representation of women in institutions and their role in decision-making.

65. The establishment and further development of national machineries was one of the most notable trends of the past decade. Most Governments in all regions had either established new national machineries, some as recently as 2004, or strengthened existing machineries. Many Governments established additional mechanisms for promoting gender equality, which included gender equality commissions, ombudspersons and focal points in line ministries to facilitate gender mainstreaming. Several countries, in particular in Latin America and the Caribbean, reported new domestic violence units in law enforcement agencies such as the police. In some countries, branches of government, for example the judiciary, had set up women's or gender committees. Parliamentary committees, task forces or other coordination mechanisms for women and gender equality helped establish gender equality as a regular item on the agenda of both the executive and the legislature. Several Governments indicated that their concept of national machinery now encompassed all mechanisms established for the advancement of women and gender equality at the national level, including in the executive branch, Parliament and independent or autonomous institutions.

66. Many Governments also noted an increase in women's organizations and networks and their critical advocacy role, for example in relation to violence against women. They also reported enhancing collaboration with NGOs and civil society groups and networks.

67. Governments reported integrating gender perspectives in their budgetary processes at national, regional or local levels as major achievements. Several Governments established or enhanced monitoring systems and processes, mostly in the public sector, by mandating regular reports to higher levels of government or to parliament. Many new or revised national policies or action plans included enhanced monitoring mechanisms, especially since 2000. Monitoring included the annual or pluriannual submission of public or internal government reports and parliamentary debates. Several countries, mostly in Europe, commissioned evaluations of progress in implementation of gender equality policies.

68. Several Governments noted enhanced collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated statistics and data. Governments also improved public access to the data, notably through official web sites on gender statistics. Successful efforts were made to sensitize officials in statistical bureaux and to improve interaction

between users and producers of data. Governments reported increased research and academic teaching on women and gender equality on a wide variety of topics, including: time use; violence against women, including sexual harassment; responsible fatherhood; reproductive health issues; and wage differences.

III. Obstacles and challenges

69. All Governments reported continuing challenges. Persistent gaps in all regions included low levels of women's representation in decision-making positions, stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices and occupational segregation. Violence against women, including domestic violence, was noted as a major challenge worldwide, with several African countries reporting continuing harmful practices. In some regions, in particular in Africa, parts of Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, Governments noted disproportionately high poverty levels among women and insufficient access to or control of economic resources. Governments also noted the serious effects of conflict on women. In many countries, mostly in Africa and parts of Asia, women's health, in particular maternal mortality, and the low educational levels of women and girls continued to give cause for concern. Countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe reported high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women. Trafficking in women and girls was of concern to Governments, mainly in Western Europe and North America, Asia and Central and Eastern European countries with economies in transition. In countries in most parts of the world, legislation permitting discrimination against women in the political, civil, economic and social fields is still in force.

70. All responses acknowledged general obstacles and challenges in one or more critical areas of concern. Major challenges included structural inequalities in the division of power and resources and the persistence of stereotypical attitudes and gender bias in society. Some Governments were concerned that, according to public opinion, the major issues in relation to women's advancement had been solved. A few Governments, mainly in developing countries, voiced concern that women themselves were not aware of their rights and did not claim them.

71. A number of Governments reported that discrimination in law, policy or practice continued to deprive women of their human rights in all spheres. Many Governments recorded challenges relating to progress in the representation of women in some public sectors. National statistics did not adequately reflect women's participation in some areas, particularly in relation to economic activities. The stagnation or decline of representation in some areas of public life was noted as problematic, including in political parties and peace processes.

72. Several countries noted the absence of policies or institutional frameworks for gender equality and the empowerment of women as a constraint. Gender equality policies and programmes were sometimes not linked to national development policies. Several countries noted the absence of gender-specific or gender-sensitive sectoral policies and the fact that major development policies and programmes did not systematically incorporate gender perspectives.

73. Many countries noted the gap in the implementation of policies, legislation and institutions once they had been put in place. A number of specific constraints were identified including: lack of understanding of the concept of gender equality

and the strategy of gender mainstreaming; the tendency to relegate all responsibility for promotion of gender equality to the national machinery or gender focal points; unclear or non-existent guidelines; and lack of knowledge and capacity. In many countries, the national machinery lacked status to influence major policy decisions.

74. Many Governments noted the inadequacy of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, which they felt was closely connected to the lack of sex-disaggregated statistics and indicators. Poor data diminished the effectiveness of monitoring mechanisms, such as annual reporting obligations. Difficulties in assessing the impact of gender equality policies and programmes on the day-to-day lives of women were also noted.

75. Many countries reported that resources fell short in specific sectors, including education, rural development, health, the prevention of HIV/AIDS and violence against women. Budgetary allocations to national machineries were insufficient or had decreased. Funding gaps reportedly resulted from political and macroeconomic changes. Even where funding had increased, shortfalls were experienced because of increased needs, as in the case of reproductive health programmes. Policy makers in some countries believed that gender equality had already been achieved and that funding was no longer needed. Funding modalities were also sometimes a cause for concern: reliance on short-term project funding would not encourage sustainability of gender equality policies.

76. Governments responded on the changing nature of conflict and its impact on women and girls, particularly in terms of violence against women. Not only did women suffer from gender-based violence and abuse during war, they also carried responsibility for ensuring the survival of their families. Conflicts had interrupted the provision of basic services and the implementation of policies and programmes. Women remained largely absent from participation in conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding, even where they had been involved as combatants. Several Governments reported their commitment to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

IV. Conclusions

77. **Over the past 10 years, the status and role of women has undergone a significant change on a global scale although not at an equal pace in all regions. While direct comparisons between countries are difficult, some overall trends could be discerned. There is significantly greater awareness of gender equality issues among Governments and the public at large; and increasing recognition of the effect of major global trends on women, including: globalization; market liberalization; privatization; migration; and the use of new technologies such as ICT. The participation of women in public life increased, child and maternal mortality was reduced and access to education and literacy of women and girls improved worldwide.**

78. **Governments increasingly address matters previously considered private, such as violence against women in all its forms. Trafficking is acknowledged as a major global concern. Issues affecting growing numbers of women, such as HIV/AIDS, are given greater attention. The situation of women with special needs and multiple disadvantages is increasingly being addressed.**

79. There is also greater awareness of interdependence among all critical areas of concern and of the need to ensure linkages and enhance complementarities among policies, legislation, institutional frameworks and operational programmes. Regional and international frameworks have had a positive influence on gender equality at the national level. In the 10 years since the Fourth World Conference on Women, there has been a trend towards enhanced implementation and institutionalization of the major principles and policy approaches underpinning the Platform for Action, including the principles of gender equality and women's rights as human rights. Governments reiterated their commitment to gender mainstreaming as the main strategy for the achievement of gender equality and to the involvement of women as full and equal participants in all areas of development.

80. There is a clear trend towards additional legislation to eliminate discrimination and promote gender equality. Over the past decade Governments have repealed or revised discriminatory laws and increasingly recognized the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as a critical framework for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

81. A large gap remains between policy and practice in promotion of gender equality. Responses to the questionnaire illustrate the need for comprehensive and multidimensional approaches to address continuing constraints and challenges. Public attitudes towards the advancement of women and gender equality have not changed at the same pace as policy, legal and institutional frameworks. Explicitly addressing persistent stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices is critical to the full implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session.

Part Three
Critical areas of concern and other issues

I. Critical areas of concern

A. Women and poverty

1. Introduction

82. The Beijing Platform for Action recognized gender equality as essential for the eradication of poverty and endorsed gender mainstreaming as a key strategy in poverty eradication. In signing the document, Governments committed themselves to review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women living in poverty; revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources; provide women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions; and develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty.

83. The long-standing global commitment to eradicate poverty was given added weight when the General Assembly proclaimed 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty.[41] At its fortieth session in 1996, the Commission on the Status of Women urged Governments to develop "national strategies or plans of action that should focus on the reduction of overall poverty and on eradication of absolute poverty, with targets, benchmarks for monitoring and proposals for allocation or reallocation of resources for implementation, including resources for undertaking gender impact analysis ...".[42] The resolution also emphasized that the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their social, economic and political status are essential for the eradication of poverty.

84. In 1997, the General Assembly launched the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.[43] In the same year, the General Assembly reaffirmed the importance of gender analysis as a tool for the integration of a gender dimension into poverty eradication efforts.[44] In 1999, as accelerated globalization gave new urgency to the situation of women in poverty, the Economic and Social Council recognized the differences between women and men in access to labour markets and highlighted the need for gender-specific policies.[45] The Council reiterated the call for international action in support of national efforts to eradicate poverty, with particular attention to employment creation, work and the empowerment and advancement of women.[46]

85. The outcome of the twenty-third special session brought attention to the differential impact of globalization on women and men, the importance of foreign debt and the need for equality in land rights and gender analysis of public budgets, as well as empowerment of women as a strategy for poverty eradication.

86. The Millennium Declaration recognized "gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable". Many countries are in the process of readjusting development programmes and strategies in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

87. At its forty-sixth session in March 2002, the Commission on the Status of Women urged Governments to ensure that actions to achieve poverty eradication include the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and provided a number of specific recommendations in support of this work.

2. Achievements

88. Only 14 countries did not report specifically on this critical area of concern. The overwhelming majority of countries, especially developing countries, placed poverty eradication among their national priorities and acknowledged that women are disproportionately affected by poverty. The responses confirmed that the impact of poverty on women is greater than on men and that poverty affects more women than men. Most countries reported that women are the majority of the poor. Many countries provided data that showed this explicitly. For example, in Malawi in 2003, women constituted 75 per cent of the poor, an increase from 70 per cent in 1995. In Zimbabwe, 72 per cent of female-headed households are living in poverty compared with 58 per cent of households headed by men; in South Africa, 68 per cent of female-headed households are living in poverty compared to 31 per cent of households headed by men.

89. Almost half of the countries responding acknowledged that rural women and female-headed households are among the most poor. In Costa Rica, despite a decrease in the number of poor households, the percentage of women-headed households living in poverty increased from 34.5 per cent in 2002 to 36.2 per cent in 2003. Only Burkina Faso indicated that more male-headed households live in extreme poverty, 46.9 per cent, compared with 36.5 per cent of households headed by women.

90. In Dominica, female-headed households constituted 39 per cent of the poor. In Kenya, 25 per cent of households in rural areas were headed by women and these households were the poorest sections of the population. In the Netherlands, 62 per cent of poor households were headed by women in 2000. In China, women were 60 per cent of the 29 million poor people. Denmark, which had a very low incidence of poverty and almost equal proportions of men and women among the poor, emphasized that single parents have a slightly higher risk of poverty.

91. In addition, there are regional differences. For example, in some parts of Latin America urban poverty is higher than rural poverty. In Brazil most of the poorest live in urban *favelas*. Costa Rica also reported more poverty among female-headed households in urban areas. In most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, the majority of the poor are in rural, agricultural areas. Certain Eastern European countries, for example Lithuania and Slovakia, also indicated that rural women are at a higher risk of living in poverty. In several Western European countries the poverty divide is more obvious by age groups, where elderly women, along with young single mothers, are at the highest risk of becoming poor.

92. A few countries were able to report a decrease in poverty among different categories of women. For example, in Malaysia, poverty among female-headed households fell to 12.5 per cent in 2002, from 16.1 per cent in 1999. In Nicaragua, for every 100 men living in poverty, the number of women living in poverty fell from 98.8 to 97.3 between 1998 and 2001. In Viet Nam the percentage of female-headed households living in poverty was reduced from 28 per cent in 1998 to

20 per cent in 2002. In Chile, female poverty declined between 1990 and 2000 from 39.3 per cent to 20.8 per cent.

93. A growing number of countries developed plans for poverty eradication among women or mainstreamed gender perspectives in existing national strategies. For example, Argentina and Bolivia recognized the feminization of poverty and mainstreamed gender perspectives into all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty, including national poverty reduction strategy. In addition, Bolivia adopted a special programme for poverty reduction among women for 2001-2003. In Belgium gender perspectives were integrated into the poverty policy of the Flemish community. Ethiopia incorporated gender equality as a cross-cutting issue in its poverty reduction strategy. In Cameroon, the Government also addressed the issue of poverty eradication among women within the national poverty reduction strategy and developed a special programme to address poverty among women. In a national poverty assessment conducted in 2003 in Eritrea, the issue of gender inequality was given prominence. A requirement to estimate the effect of socio-economic policy proposals on women in poverty has been suggested in Ireland.

94. Several countries, including Algeria, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, Guinea, India, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan and Liberia, have set time-bound goals to reduce poverty. India's strategy for empowering women included a target to reduce the female poverty ratio by 5 per cent by 2007 and by 15 per cent by 2012. One of the key targets of Ireland's national action plan against poverty and social exclusion is to reduce the number of women who are "consistently poor" to below 2 per cent, and, if possible, eliminate such poverty by 2007.

95. The negative situation of female-headed households was often attributed to cuts in public spending on welfare programmes and basic social services, as well as high rates of indirect taxation, minimum-wage policies and inadequate social security systems, together with the prevalence of stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men in society.

96. Many countries reported specific policies and programmes in addressing the poverty of women. For example, Colombia's programme addressed the needs of more than 50 per cent of poor women heads of households in rural and urban areas. The main beneficiaries of assistance under Barbados's programme were single mothers. Malaysia conducted research on the situation of female-headed households; provided a variety of allowances; expanded access to credit for rural and urban women and provided training and counselling. In 2002 Viet Nam made loans to over 20 per cent of poor female-headed households.

97. Governments use two main complementary strategies to reduce poverty among women. One focuses on economic growth and the creation of income-generating activities and facilities; the other on building human capital through education, training and improved social services. Several countries focused on promoting economic growth and economic development.

98. Policies aimed at employment creation take into consideration the characteristics of poverty in different countries. Countries such as Cameroon, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines and Mexico are promoting employment creation in the agricultural sector because their poverty is primarily rural. India and Kenya created income-generating activities for women both in rural and urban areas. In India, self-employment schemes for rural areas launched in 1999 benefited 40 per cent of

women; and in urban areas 30 per cent of the employment opportunities created under the wage employment scheme are now reserved for women.

99. Governments are increasingly aware that employment must provide minimum wage and social security coverage in order to eradicate poverty among women. For example, in Guatemala, 84 per cent of women do not have any social security coverage. Portugal adopted minimum wage legislation in 2000, and in 2003 69 per cent of its beneficiaries were women. When the national minimum wage was introduced in the United Kingdom in 1999, women made up 70 per cent of the beneficiaries. Employment policies for women in many countries addressed the gender wage gap and reconciled family and work responsibilities. In South Africa, 76 per cent of households headed by women receive lower income than households headed by men.

100. A number of developing countries emphasized the importance of integrating macroeconomic and social policies. Policies on macroeconomic stability, structural adjustment, trade, taxation and employment should be analysed from a gender perspective to determine their impact on poverty of women.

101. Most Governments referred to the positive impact of microcredit and microfinance on the situation of women in poverty. Over the past five years, China allocated microcredit to help 2 million women out of poverty. Guinea's project for promotion of rural initiatives has granted 100,000 loans since 1991 and 70 per cent of beneficiaries were women. In Bolivia, women received 58.7 per cent of all credit. Congo implemented 107 projects to improve women's access to microcredit during 1999-2002. In Kyrgyzstan, women were 56.4 per cent of microcredit recipients. In Malawi, the Government introduced an affirmative action programme to increase women's access to credit.

102. The Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session (General Assembly resolution S-23/3) recommended legislative and institutional reform to expand women's access to and control over land, including the right to inheritance and ownership and other productive resources. Progress in implementation remains slow, but more and more countries give attention to this issue. The Dominican Republic included women in its land distribution programme, granting them the same rights as men. Liberia now allows women to inherit property equally with men. Namibian law stipulates equal rights for women and men in communal land. Uganda's land tenure law reforms improved women's access to and control over land. In Zimbabwe, the Government is pursuing a policy to allocate 20 per cent of all resettled land to women.

103. A number of countries focused their activities on increasing investments in education, training and social services, including social security, pensions and insurance as a strategy to combat poverty among women. For example, Austria, Canada and Italy reported that increasing investments in various types of social allowances and benefits, including pensions, have widespread and highly positive impacts. Japan introduced new measures for child support. Women's access to education and health care is at the centre of Jordan's national anti-poverty strategy. Better education is considered a means to increase women's participation in the labour market. Costa Rica established a commission to address women's social services needs. Egypt developed a family insurance scheme to benefit female-headed households. In 2003, Belize introduced a non-contributory pension for women over 65.

104. A number of countries utilized both strategies, promoting economic growth, employment and income-generating activities and increasing investments in basic social services and goods. For example, Brazil's poverty eradication programme addresses the structural causes of hunger and poverty by providing water treatment plants, rural electrification and housing and generating employment and income in rural areas. At the same time, social programmes fight female malnutrition and maternal and infant mortality, and provide health education.

105. Some countries addressed poverty among women as a multidimensional phenomenon, involving the social exclusion and marginalization that prevents women from exercising their human rights and gaining access to productive resources, services and institutions. For example, national plans for social inclusion in Austria, Belgium, France and Slovakia focused on poverty eradication, especially among women.

3. Obstacles and challenges

106. Responses from Governments confirmed that cultural, economic, legal and political factors contribute to the growing proportion of women among the poor. Poverty among women stems from ongoing discrimination against women in the labour market, including the persistent gender wage gap, unequal access to productive resources, capital, education and training and the sociocultural factors that continue to influence gender relations and preserve existing discrimination against women. For example, in 2002, the income of women amounted only to 65 per cent of that of men in Kyrgyzstan. In Bolivia, the largest gender wage gap is in agriculture, where women receive less that 29 per cent of men's wages.

107. Economic processes associated with globalization have impacted on the livelihoods of diverse social groups, including different groups of women in rural and urban areas. Throughout the world, full-time wage employment has given way to flexible and casual forms of employment through outsourcing, contract and part-time labour and work at home. Under these circumstances, the increased participation of women in low-paying, irregular jobs with poor working conditions and without any social coverage has contributed to the increasing poverty of women. In rural areas in several countries, including Djibouti, Ecuador, Guatemala, India, Malawi, Mexico and Nigeria, the shift from food production to cash crop production has impacted on the lives of many small and marginal farmers, who are mostly women, and threatened household food security.

108. Rural women, especially in developing countries, continued to be disproportionately affected by trade liberalization, commercialization of agriculture and the increasing privatization of resources and services. Rural women do not have equal access to productive resources, capital and technology, including ICT, nor to gainful employment, decision-making, education, training and health services in many countries.

109. Women's access to and control of land, especially agricultural land, remains a challenge in many countries. For example, in Mauritania only 18.7 per cent of women have land titles in their own names. In Nepal according to the 2001 census, only 11 per cent of the total households reported women as land owners.

110. Responses confirmed that public funding and delivery of education, health and social services, including childcare, care for the aged, and care for the retired and

disabled, is vital to women. Botswana, Egypt, Guatemala, Ireland, Kenya, Mauritania, Slovakia and Sweden noted that approaches that reduce, outsource and privatize public services may have a disproportionately negative impact on women in poverty. The issue of HIV/AIDS and poverty was raised by a number of southern African countries.

111. Canada, Finland and the Netherlands emphasized the need for flexible parental leave, improved childcare facilities and other services to help women reconcile family and work responsibilities. Other countries, including Barbados, Belize, Central African Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran, focused on the importance of education and training to equip women with the necessary technical and social skills for gainful employment and entrepreneurship.

112. Many countries noted the continued absence of timely, reliable, sex-disaggregated data, which is essential for assessing the situation of women and men in poverty and the impact of poverty eradication policies or programmes on women or men.

113. Allocation of resources is an important indicator of commitment to policies and programmes aimed at eradicating poverty among women. Programmes aimed at poverty eradication among women are often managed by meagrely financed departments or agencies.

114. Overall reduction of poverty in developing countries is dependent on external assistance and debt cancellation. Expenditure for debt servicing is frequently much higher than expenditure for social services. Despite its importance, not much information was available on debt cancellation. Only Burkina Faso reported on positive experience in allocating resources from the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative to improve socio-economic infrastructure and to provide technology, including ICT, for women living in poverty.

4. Conclusions

115. Since 1995, it has been increasingly recognized that women and men experience poverty differently and that the process of impoverishment is different for women and men. Women also find it more difficult than men to break out of poverty, owing to existing discrimination in the sharing of household responsibilities, access to education and training and employment, as well as in economic and political decision-making. There is also growing recognition that gender equality is critical for sustainable and equitable economic growth.

116. There is a positive shift towards considering the situation of women living in poverty as a more complex phenomenon than mere economic insufficiency. There have been increased attempts to address the multidimensional nature of poverty at the policy level, focusing on preventing the marginalization and social exclusion of people in poverty in general, and women in particular. Countries have addressed globalization and its differential impact on women and men, including reductions in welfare and social expenditure that disproportionately affect women and hinder efforts to improve basic social services, including education, health and childcare. A growing number of countries are making efforts to develop and implement national gender-sensitive policies and programmes for poverty eradication and to mainstream

gender perspectives in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal on poverty eradication.

117. **Although most countries indicated that the majority of the poor are women, only a few countries were able to provide empirical evidence of this. Aggregate estimates of the incidence of poverty are rarely broken down by sex, and there is no regular collection and updating of data on women in poverty. This impedes gender-sensitive policy-making, implementation and monitoring of poverty eradication efforts.**

118. **Further attention needs to be given to increasing women's access to, and control over, productive resources and capital and participation in economic and political decision-making as critical elements for reducing poverty among women. Systematic and consistent application of gender analysis is required to ensure attention to the priorities and needs of both women and men in poverty eradication policies and programmes. Although the Platform for Action drew attention to the critical importance of the unequal division of family responsibilities between women and men, little attention has been given to addressing this constraint in the context of poverty eradication. The focus on poverty eradication in the context of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals can provide an important opportunity to bring greater attention to the situation of women in poverty, if there is a strong focus on incorporating gender perspectives into implementation of the Millennium Development Goal on poverty eradication.**

B. Education and training of women

1. Introduction

119. The Platform for Action called on Governments to provide universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children by 2000; to close the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005; and to provide universal primary education in all countries before 2015. Governments were called upon to reduce female illiteracy rates to at least half their 1990 level, with emphasis on rural women, migrant refugee and internally displaced women and women with disabilities. The Platform also addressed vocational training; science and technology; and the development of non-discriminatory education and training.

120. The outcome of the twenty-third special session noted constraints such as the lack of resources, political will and commitment to improve education infrastructure and undertake educational reforms; persistent gender discrimination and bias, including in teacher training; gender-based occupational stereotyping in schools, institutions of further education; lack of childcare facilities; persistent use of gender stereotypes in educational materials; and insufficient attention to the link between women's enrolment in higher educational institutions and labour market dynamics.[47]

121. The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals recognized the need to ensure that all girls and boys complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys have equal access to all levels of education by 2015.[48] A number of targets were established in line with the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All.

2. Achievements

122. In many countries, for example in Egypt, El Salvador, Liberia, Mauritania, Morocco, Seychelles and Yemen, education was one of the priorities for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. During the past decade, most developing countries increased primary school enrolment. A number of countries reported universal access to basic education. Many States recognized the importance of action to increase student enrolment, retention and regular attendance. An initiative in Mozambique was aimed at raising the awareness of the community of the importance of education for girls, upgrading the levels of teachers and education staff and setting up annual targets for enrolment of girls in all districts where there were gender disparities.

123. Several countries guaranteed equal access to education and the elimination of gender disparities in education. Many countries incorporated the universal right to education in their constitutions. For example, Oman guaranteed by law education for all by 2015. In some countries where basic education was compulsory but not universal, legal penalties were imposed on parents who did not fulfil their obligations. Several national policies also guaranteed completion of basic education for girls, especially for those living in rural and deprived areas, as well as opportunities for women and girls to continue their education. Ethiopia brought girls into school with a programme that brought school closer to the community, provided flexible and relevant curricula and encouraged female facilitators from the community to participate.

124. Several countries adopted educational reform to ensure universal primary education by 2015. Countries adopted and amended legislation and policies; established new institutional mechanisms; strengthened collaboration among ministries, civil society and international organizations; and mainstreamed gender perspectives in the education sector. Egypt established a series of one-classroom schools for girls and constructed community schools, enabling more girls to go to school in their own neighbourhood.

125. Other measures included establishing schools for girls, education trust funds to cover costs for rural poor families, educational scholarships, free or subsidized boarding, and counselling programmes for students at risk of dropping out, as well as employing women teachers in all schools attended by girls. China provided subsidized girls' boarding schools and Ethiopia gave incentives for schools that raised the enrolment of female students and reduced repetition and drop-out rates.

126. Many States reported that the gender gap in literacy had narrowed considerably. In Thailand, women accounted for 56 per cent of the illiterate population in 2000, down from 62 per cent in 1994. In Brazil, female illiteracy decreased from 20 per cent in 1991 to 12.63 per cent in 2000, the largest decline for women. Egypt reduced female illiteracy from 50 per cent in 1996 to 41.2 per cent in 2004.

127. Many countries accomplished their goals through national literacy programmes and campaigns. For example, Yemen's National Strategy for Literacy Training and Adult Education Literacy decreased the illiteracy rate from 82.8 per cent in 1994 to 74.1 per cent in 2000. In Honduras, the female illiteracy rate fell from 34.7 per cent to 19.8 per cent between 1998 and 2001 as a result of the adult literacy and basic education programme.

128. Informal education was important in reducing illiteracy. Some countries, including Austria, Canada, Sweden and Thailand, addressed higher illiteracy among women migrants through literacy programmes. Canada provided basic education for adult immigrant women and ensured women's access to adult literacy by providing childcare facilities, flexible hours and a transportation allowance.

129. One of the achievements since 1995 was a significant increase in female enrolment at the tertiary level. In general, women's enrolment has improved and increasingly exceeded that of men. Women's enrolment reached more than 50 per cent or higher in many countries, in particular in Eastern and Western Europe. In Qatar, the percentage of women graduates from university increased from 34.7 per cent in 1996-1997 to 72 per cent in 2000-2001. In El Salvador, women's participation in higher education increased from 9.6 per cent in 1995 to 15.9 per cent in 2002. Some countries not only reached the 50/50 goal, but women often outnumbered, and outperformed, male students.

130. Fields of study for women have expanded, and more women choose non-traditional courses, such as engineering, science and technology. Some countries reported positive trends. In 2003, more women took science and computing subjects in Singapore's universities, making up 64 and 27 per cent, respectively. In Viet Nam, the proportion of women science examinees at tertiary level increased to 52.6 per cent, reflecting development in women's career choices. However, many countries still have a considerable gender gap in tertiary education, despite non-discrimination policies in education, and have taken various measures to increase the number of women, particularly in science and technology. In Germany in 2003, women wrote only one fifth of post-doctoral scientific theses, occupied only one-ninth of professorships and made up only 5.9 per cent of leading positions in non-university research institutes.

131. Some countries adopted affirmative action in higher education to increase the number of female students and women among faculties in higher education. The Republic of Korea created new teaching positions to be filled solely by female professors, followed by action that laid the legal foundation for a quota system to ensure recruitment of female professors.

132. Despite progress in the past decade, gender stereotyping persists in education. Many countries reported action to remove discriminatory elements, including revision of curricula, textbooks and teaching aids to use non-sexist language and the introduction of gender-sensitive approaches in curricula development. Bolivia reported including courses and training programmes on gender issues in the formal curriculum and strengthening research on gender equality. In Angola, a key issue was shaping attitudes, values and behaviours, eliminating prejudices and stereotypes and developing broadened perceptions of the roles of women in society. Greece trained and sensitized teachers on gender equality and relations between women and men, and produced teaching materials on gender equality. Lebanon removed any information from educational curricula that discriminated against women's rights and promoted stereotyped images of women. Several countries reported on efforts to desegregate courses on technology, industry, carpentry and home economics. Some countries legislated to provide equal educational opportunities and remove discrimination against girls. In 2002, the Republic of Korea amended its basic education act to promote gender equality in education.

133. A number of countries made policy recommendations to combat gender-based violence in the education system. Several countries addressed sexual harassment, sexual violence, HIV/AIDS and trafficking through sexual and health education and human rights education in the formal curriculum. For example, Slovakia aimed to introduce sex education for all grades by 2005. China disseminated educational guidelines on HIV/AIDS prevention for students in primary and middle schools. Ireland developed a social and personal health education programme for post-primary schools, as well as a module for boys in the transition year, which included a discussion of violence against women.

134. Only a few countries provided information on increased financial allocations for education. Many countries considered it urgent to increase expenditures on education for girls from poor, indigenous and rural families. For example, China invested the proceeds of national bonds on public utilities to reconstruct schools and launch primary and middle-school distance education in rural areas. Morocco developed a strategy to reserve 20 per cent of the State budget and 20 per cent of international aid for basic social initiatives, which will increase girls' school attendance in rural areas.

135. Canada, the Dominican Republic and Ireland provided scholarships for women in financial difficulties. Mexico provided grants and loans for marginalized and indigenous groups and to those living in poverty. Single-parent families in particular benefited from these programmes. The United Kingdom established a lone parent's grant and a mature students' bursary fund. Canada's student loans ensured access for more than 350,000 students each year. About 58 per cent of the beneficiaries were women.

136. Several countries reported literacy courses, basic education or self-enhancement programmes for adults, some specifically designed for rural women. For example Yemen launched literacy programmes for rural women and Thailand expanded informal education for women in remote areas. In Finland, more than half of the population between the ages of 18 to 64 participated in adult education. Adult education was a growing area in Ireland, with women participants outnumbering men approximately four to one. A greater percentage of rural women, especially young women, took advantage of the youth skills training outreach programme in the Dominican Republic and the programme for the advancement of rural women in Guatemala, which provides income-generating projects.

137. Several countries acted to maintain school attendance among parents and pregnant students in secondary and technical schools. Some countries allocated places in school for students of either sex who are, or are about to be, parents; developed handbooks on social interaction, including on issues such as keeping pregnant teenagers and young mothers in the education system; and set up public complaints offices to handle reports of discrimination against pregnant students and young mothers. Mexico launched a programme providing economic and school support for pregnant teenagers to enable them to cope with maternity while continuing to study, and Bolivia prohibited the expulsion of pregnant students from the formal educational system.

138. Several countries provided equal access and opportunities for women in distance learning. The Republic of Korea launched teaching and correspondence courses in remote areas. The Seychelles launched a national distance learning policy through its adult learning and distance education centre. Distance learning

programmes were especially attractive to women with family commitments who were unable or reluctant to leave home.

139. An increasing number of women are pursuing ICT training through formal and informal education, with governmental support, for example in Austria. A high percentage of girls attended computer classes at the business training centre and computer knowledge centre in Dominica. Finland and Germany supported special projects to develop ICT skills for girls and women, and Germany also supported the promotion of women in ICT jobs. The Islamic Republic of Iran produced educational CDs on women's needs as supplementary training materials.

140. Many countries provided practical information for students on job market and career choices. Iceland and the Maldives developed educational booklets. Malta provided gender-sensitive vocational guidance for school counsellors and guidance teachers. Germany provided gender-specific career advice to all secondary school students.

141. While women were still underrepresented in technical and vocational education, there were some encouraging signs. Women had begun to enter areas dominated by men, such as mechanical and electrical engineering in Mauritania. In the Republic of Korea, the percentage of women in maritime studies increased from 5 to 17 per cent and in engineering and construction from zero in 1994 to 8 per cent in 2002.

3. Obstacles and challenges

142. Honduras identified lack of coherence between basic, adult, vocational, secondary and higher education as a major challenge, while Egypt noted the lack of enforcement of compulsory education. Challenges were also reported in ensuring education for children of seasonal workers in China, indigenous populations in Ecuador, pastoral groups in Ethiopia and for girls living in countries in crisis like Liberia.

143. In a number of countries, progress in education had not led to increased access for women to the labour market. In the Maldives, women still tend to be concentrated in traditionally female jobs and sectors. Many countries reported rigid stereotyping of subject and career choices and gender segmentation in fields of study. In Qatar, the concentration of women in traditional professions means that female graduates tended to have similar sets of skills, which made it difficult for them to find employment. Some countries pointed out the need to analyse and refine employment strategies for women to respond to changing market demand.

144. The urban-rural gap was reported as a challenge in achieving equality in education. A number of countries identified as obstacles gender disparities in enrolment rates, gender stereotyping and illiteracy. More countries reported success with enrolment than with retention and completion. Bolivia reported that the school retention rate for girls was low. Colombia and Cyprus reported, however, that male drop-out rates were higher than those of female students at all levels, including in secondary education.

145. A number of countries reported the double or triple workloads of girls as an obstacle. While studying, girls were responsible for domestic chores such as caring for siblings, cooking and sometimes also for community tasks. Mauritius reported

that girls drop out of school because of sexual abuse, pregnancy and poor school facilities.

146. Several countries indicated that despite policies on equal access to vocational and technical education and training in all sectors, training for women was concentrated in the services sector. In Lebanon women took up secretarial, office administration, computer maintenance and data-processing and teaching posts. Apprenticeships in technical and science areas remained dominated by men and boys.

147. Colombia, Ecuador and Kyrgyzstan saw challenges in the shortage of qualified personnel to research and teach gender equality issues and the lack of a gender approach in university curricula. Ecuador reported that the insensitivity of mid-level management to gender issues and women's rights was an obstacle.

4. Conclusions

148. **Many States recognized the importance of education and training for gender equality and empowerment of women and had achieved progress in primary education, but consistent efforts are needed to close the gender gap in both primary and secondary education. Steps need to be taken to: increase resource allocations for education of girls; create real opportunities for girls to pursue non-traditional fields; remove gender bias from educational materials and curricula; and accommodate the needs of specific groups of women and girls, for example indigenous and migrant women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups.**

149. **The gap between women's access to education, academic performance and access to employment opportunities must be explicitly addressed. Appropriate training, career guidance and counselling must be provided to assist women to develop professional skills required to respond to the demands of current employment markets. Persistent gender stereotypes, which hinder women from fully utilizing their education and training, need to be explicitly addressed. The potential of training in information and communication technologies for contributing to closing the gender gap in employment should be more fully exploited.**

150. **Enhancing institutional mechanisms to monitor implementation of the gender-sensitive educational reforms put in place over the past decade is essential. The active engagement of civil society can make a major contribution. Innovative partnerships, for example with local political and community leaders, can facilitate reaching some of the most disadvantaged groups.**

C. Women and health

1. Introduction

151. The Platform for Action reiterated recommendations from the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) on women's health, and made new commitments. It outlined five strategic objectives and actions: increasing women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services; strengthening preventive programmes; undertaking gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases,

HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health issues; promoting research and disseminating information on women's health; and increasing resources for women's health.

152. During its forty-third session, the Commission on the Status of Women further enhanced commitments of the Platform for Action on women and health in its agreed conclusions by drawing attention to women's health issues such as infectious diseases, mental health and occupational diseases.[49]

153. Two of the Millennium Development Goals refer directly to women's health: to improve maternal health by reducing by three quarters the ratio of women dying in childbirth; and to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases by halting and beginning to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and the incidence of malaria and other major diseases. In 2004, the World Health Assembly adopted, for the first time, a resolution on a reproductive health strategy.

2. Achievements

154. All responses referred to women and health. Almost half of the countries reported on revising, strengthening and amending health-related action plans, policies and agreements to include gender perspectives. A few countries set up committees to integrate gender perspectives into national health programmes and policies. Iceland set up a committee to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into the work of health-care institutions and health service providers. Countries reported on integrating gender perspectives into different aspects of health. El Salvador and Ethiopia reported awareness programmes on mainstreaming gender perspectives in health. France, for instance, introduced a gender-specific approach to pathologies and their treatment, taking into account the specific health needs of men and women. A number of countries focused on integrating gender perspectives into reproductive health. Costa Rica adopted legislation regarding paternity, sharing of parental responsibilities and providing education and services for teenage mothers. Brazil established a gender-sensitive national women's health policy to guarantee women's human rights and reduce maternal mortality. Bahrain adopted a gender-mainstreaming strategy in the health sector and set up national oversight committees.

155. Mexico introduced gender-sensitive budgeting to guarantee equitable and non-discriminatory access to health services. The Philippines set aside 30 per cent of its health sector investment to improve women's health. El Salvador, Mexico and Oman also reported allocating specific resources for women's health from the health sector budget. Ecuador and Paraguay reported earmarking of funds for reproductive health. China allocated specific resources to reduce maternal mortality. The United Kingdom allocated funds to breast and cervical cancer screening programmes.

156. Some countries reported allocating resources to specific groups. Canada's five-year research project on diabetes allocates over half its resources to aboriginal communities because diabetes is common among indigenous women. Countries reported on improving access to health programmes for specific groups of women. Canada's services for First Nation and Inuit women included improving screening, incorporating Inuit midwifery and promoting traditional Inuit diets. Greece set up mobile health units for Roma women providing gynaecological examinations. Brazil researched sickle-cell anaemia among vulnerable groups. Countries also addressed the health of women with disabilities. They focused on access (Finland);

rehabilitation (China); prescription drugs (United States of America); and competitive sports (Armenia).

157. Some countries used mandatory medical insurance to ensure access, while others, like Algeria and Jordan, provided free health care for those unable to afford it. The Dominican Republic guaranteed women access to all preventive and comprehensive health services. Eleven countries reported new or updated laws or policies to ensure or increase access, particularly for young women and people living in rural areas.

158. Bolivia, Mexico, Peru, Thailand and the United States of America reported increased access for women to health insurance. Bolivia expanded its basic health insurance to include universal maternal-child assistance. Mexico included households headed by women in its family health insurance. By expanding insurance coverage, Peru quadrupled the number of pregnant women and new mothers receiving health care between 2001 and 2002. The United States expanded prenatal coverage for low-income women and their children.

159. Countries such as Bahrain, China, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Namibia, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam reported on access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation as an important health measure for women.

160. Half of all responses reported maternal health programmes; 28 per cent addressing violence against women, specifically female genital mutilation/cutting; and 25 per cent reducing maternal mortality following abortion. Sixty-five per cent of countries in Latin America have begun to integrate reproductive health into their primary health-care systems.[50]

161. Expanding coverage and access to sexual and reproductive health for women was a priority in many countries. Colombia's comprehensive approach addresses: safe maternity; family planning for men and women; adolescent pregnancies; sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS; cancer screening; and domestic violence. Liberia focused on decentralizing reproductive health services to improve service in rural areas. Ecuador, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic were the only countries to refer specifically to improving quality of care. Kyrgyzstan legislated to protect reproductive rights.

162. Many countries established national family planning programmes in the 1990s. Some integrated gender issues. Colombia encouraged couple communication on family planning to promote sexual and reproductive rights. Some countries reported health care and family planning for specific groups: for instance, Slovakia offered family planning services to refugees. A few countries set up reproductive health centres or family planning services in health centres. In Jordan, over 200 health centres were offering family planning; in Peru, free family planning services were available in all health establishments; and in Turkey, family planning counselling was available in all health units. Countries in transition re-established or set up new reproductive health centres. Uzbekistan provided free contraceptives.

163. Eighteen countries reported greater use of contraceptives. In Burkina Faso, contraceptive use increased from 8.32 per cent in 1995 to 14.48 per cent in 2002; in Egypt from 24 per cent in 1980 to 56 per cent in 2000; in Uzbekistan from 13 per cent in 1980 to 62.3 per cent in 2003. Some countries reported low use of contraceptives: the Central African Republic reported that only 7 per cent of women

used modern contraception, although 58 per cent had sexual relations before the age of 15. Chile reported declining fertility rates.

164. Some countries have improved rules and regulations on voluntary sterilization so as to comply with the prerequisite of women's informed consent. Brazil guaranteed the right to sterilization without requiring another person's consent. Norway is looking into the fact that the cost of sterilization is higher for women than for men. Emergency contraception is now available without prescription in some countries such as Belgium, France and Iceland, or within some regions of countries. In some cases emergency contraception is only available through doctors or only prescribed to victims of rape.

165. Complications during pregnancy and delivery are among the leading causes of death for women in the developing world. Despite some decrease, maternal mortality is still high.[50] Malaysia, Oman and Spain reported an increase, and Malawi a major increase, mostly as the result of HIV/AIDS. Some countries reported a high level of success in reducing maternal mortality: for instance, El Salvador and Uzbekistan halved maternal mortality between 1992 and 2002. In other cases, maternal mortality remained constant.

166. Some countries reported that maternal health care is free to all women. In several countries, over 75 per cent of pregnant women receive prenatal care, although not always from qualified personnel, nor early enough to detect risk factors. In other countries, 75 to 95 per cent of women have no prenatal care. Algeria launched a risk-free childbirth programme to improve maternal health. The Islamic Republic of Iran and Morocco focused on healthy pregnancies and deliveries. Other programmes targeted pregnant women at risk. The Syrian Arab Republic's maternal health programme upgraded its monitoring system, technology and capacities of midwives. Some countries, including Malawi, improved women's access to health centres and hospitals by providing bicycle ambulances. Nicaragua provided breastfeeding consultants and the United Kingdom made maternity services more flexible, accessible and appropriate for women and their families. Mauritania introduced scans, raised awareness about spacing pregnancies and addressed obstacles to visiting health providers.

167. Some industrialized countries noted increased abortion rates, especially among young women, while in others rates were stable. Countries with economies in transition reported reduced abortion rates, as a result of access to contraceptives: in the Russian Federation they decreased by a third, and abortion-related deaths fell from 24.2 per cent of maternal deaths in 1999 to 18.5 per cent in 2002. In Slovakia, abortions fell by almost 60 per cent over the last decade.

168. China, India and the Republic of Korea banned sex-selective abortions and penalized unqualified and illegal practitioners. Illegal abortions accounted for almost one third of maternal deaths in Chile and was the second most common cause of hospital admissions in Honduras over the past two decades. Argentina set up programmes to avoid hospital admissions as the result of post-abortion complications. Countries did not report on post-abortion care.

169. Governments increasingly see infertility as a reproductive health issue. In some cases family planning programmes provide treatment for infertility, although availability and affordability vary. In Greece and Viet Nam, single women now have the same access to infertility treatment as couples.

170. Twenty-one per cent of respondents reported attention to early detection of breast and cervical cancer and Australia recorded a significant decrease in deaths. Japan reported on self-examination programmes and various countries researched breast and cervical cancers. Screening programmes stabilized the incidence of breast cancer in Canada. Germany introduced national mammography screening and invited all women between the ages of 50 to 69 to be screened.

171. A few countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and the United States discussed actions to reduce psychological, physical or sexual abuse against women. Programmes focused on training health personnel, doctors and the general public in violence as a health problem and on ways to provide adequate care and support to women and girl victims of violence or those at risk.

172. Forty-six countries raised the issue of teenage pregnancy. Eight countries had programmes to reduce teen pregnancies, provide life skills to prevent unwanted pregnancies and assist pregnant girls. In the Netherlands, a conference on teenage pregnancy discussed prevention of teenage pregnancies, structural support and shelters for pregnant girls and teenage mothers. Governments used media campaigns (Colombia), information sessions (Maldives) and publications (United Kingdom) to help teenagers avoid pregnancy. Argentina and Bolivia acted to keep pregnant girls in school. Uruguay emphasized training health providers on prevention of teen pregnancy.

173. Ten countries reported activities in health, family life or population education. In France, sex education is compulsory from primary school through college. Cuba referred to a national sex education programme and Denmark reported on health-care education. The Congo used the radio to disseminate information on family planning and reproductive rights. Other countries developed educational materials: Honduras published a family planning guidance handbook for adolescents.

174. Initiatives on involving men in reproductive health included: conferences and seminars to raise awareness about responsible fatherhood (El Salvador); studies to promote male involvement (Honduras); and educating young boys and girls on reproductive health (Bulgaria).

175. Germany published and disseminated information to reduce the incidence of eating disorders. Honduras and Indonesia reported measures to reduce anaemia in children and women. The Congo instituted an awareness campaign on iron deficiency by training women as nutritional extension workers.

176. Countries gave some attention to education and training on women's health. Countries reported training for doctors and health-care personnel in women's health, including on reproductive health and violence against women. Canada, the Congo and Ecuador were incorporating the training of traditional practitioners into the formal health sector.

177. Historically women have dominated nursing and midwifery, as in Maldives, where all nurses and midwives are women, and Canada, where 80 per cent of health-care professionals are women. In some countries the number of women in medical schools is increasing. In Qatar, the only specialized school open to women is the school of nursing. In 2001, half the medical doctors in Oman were women, and in Portugal over one third were women. In Ireland women now make up the majority of graduate medical students. In Cuba, 70 per cent of enrolling and graduating students in medical science are women.

178. Over one third of countries reported studies and collection of sex-disaggregated data, particularly on sexual and reproductive health, occupational diseases and socio-economic impact on health. Norway issued guidelines for including gender as a variable in medical research. Canada, Germany and Morocco established institutes to research gender and health. In Ecuador international funding facilitated a national maternal health survey conducted in 22,000 households.

179. Ten countries addressed women's mental health. The United Kingdom adopted a women's mental health strategic plan and Honduras instituted a domestic violence and mental health action plan. Slovakia established a project on psychological assistance to asylum-seekers.

180. A few countries, including Germany, Sweden and Iceland, studied and acted on gender-specific factors in addiction. Canada, France and Sweden adopted gender-specific tobacco control strategies. Spain succeeded in reducing the number of women smokers through coordinated action by several ministries. Denmark and France targeted smoking as a risk factor, specifically for pregnant women.

181. Worldwide, tuberculosis is the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age. Progression from infection to disease and fatality rates are higher for women than men.[51] Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Djibouti, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Namibia and Uzbekistan reported initiatives to fight tuberculosis and malaria. Kyrgyzstan initiated a gender analysis of tuberculosis morbidity.

3. Obstacles and challenges

182. Among the remaining challenges, 10 countries reported insufficient sex-disaggregated data; incomplete or non-existent health statistics; lack of gender indicators; and lack of expertise and resources for research on women and health. Mauritania and the Netherlands mentioned lack of sex-disaggregated data on minorities and people with disabilities.

183. Countries reported a tendency to limit women's health policies to their reproductive roles and to neglect other priority issues for women's health. In this respect, countries raised mental health, stress disorders, substance abuse and cancer screening. In Sweden, women are the main sufferers from increased levels of anxiety, stress and sleeping disorders. The number of female suicides in France has increased, indicating lack of attention to women who may suffer from mental disorders. In Iceland, more men than women commit suicide, but more women attempt it. In Sweden girls between the ages of 13 and 20 are overrepresented among children treated for intentional self-destructive injuries. The proportion of women admitted for substance abuse treatment in Spain rose between 1996 and 2001, as did women's deaths from drugs. Countries reported on challenges regarding reproductive cancers, including promoting the availability of screening in all areas.

184. Insufficient funding constrains both health services for women and gender-sensitive health policies. There has been an overall reduction of social investment in some countries. Palestine and Uzbekistan discussed the difficulty of relying on international donors. A lack of human and financial resources limits primary health care in rural and remote areas. The Islamic Republic of Iran reported that the higher cost of privatized health services put them out of the reach of poor women, seriously threatening their health. War, changes in social and economic structures and trade

barriers were cited as constraints on women's access and the quality of services. Many countries reported that urban women have much better access to services than women in rural areas. In Yemen, 80 per cent of women in urban areas have access to primary health care compared to 25 per cent of rural women. Ethnic and minority groups often do not have the same access as other women. Ecuador and Egypt both reported extremely low numbers of people with public or private insurance, especially poor women. Lebanon noted access to insurance as a challenge for women.

185. Burkina Faso, Philippines and Yemen cited sociocultural attitudes and lack of information as obstacles to increasing contraceptive use. Liberia and Poland mentioned lack of access. In Burkina Faso, contraceptives were available but many women in rural areas were unfamiliar with them. Access to contraception does not guarantee its use. Up to 27 million unintended pregnancies annually result from incorrect or inconsistent contraceptive use.[52] Ecuador reported that only 26 per cent of men with access to contraceptives actually use them, which puts the burden of family planning on women. Azerbaijan, Chile, Mauritius, the Philippines and Turkey noted that male participation in reproductive health programmes was uneven and needed to be encouraged.

186. Early marriage, lack of information, poor sexual and reproductive health education and the absence of policies on adolescent reproductive health keep teenage pregnancy rates high. Some countries reported an increase in teenage pregnancies.

187. Differences within countries in access to maternal health care present another challenge. In Yemen, only 27 per cent of rural women received health care during pregnancy compared to 61 per cent of urban women. Limits on movement imposed by war or civil strife block women's access to maternal health care. High fertility rates and ongoing harmful practices are reasons for slow progress in reducing maternal mortality in Algeria and Djibouti.

188. Malnutrition among women, as a result of gender discrimination or poverty, remains a challenge in many countries. In China and Palestine there is a high incidence of anaemia and iron deficiency. In industrialized countries girls and young women suffer more often than men from anorexia, bulimia and obesity. Studies in Denmark and Germany show that even though girls' diets are generally healthier than boys', more girls than boys suffer from eating disorders.

189. Countries reported on various environmental health challenges. For example, Brazil and Djibouti raised the health consequences of lack of adequate water supply and sanitation facilities. A few countries discussed pollution as a health concern for women. The challenge of controlling infectious diseases, specifically tuberculosis and malaria, also remained a challenge.

190. The health needs of vulnerable groups were raised as a challenge by a number of countries. Approximately a tenth of countries addressed health issues of older women. The United States reported research on menopause, which is essential in addressing health concerns of ageing women. Nepal reported that its health-care system neglects women aged 50 to 59 because they fall between being of reproductive age and being elderly citizens.

4. Conclusions

191. **Despite efforts made over the past decade, women's needs and rights with regard to health are still not being met. Reproductive health needs are inadequately addressed and maternal mortality remains high in many countries. The persistence and even increase of teenage pregnancies and teenage abortions in some countries indicate that adolescent reproductive health needs more attention. Disparities in access to reproductive health services between rural and urban areas need to be addressed. Among the lessons learned, the notable reduction in abortion among countries in transition suggested a strong correlation between increased access to family planning and fewer abortions. Since women, especially young women, continue to die from illegal and clandestine abortions, countries should develop primary care guidelines for post-abortion complications. Countries have to do more to motivate women to undergo cancer screening and to utilize available services.**

192. **While there has been considerable progress in integrating gender perspectives in public health policies, particularly in reproductive health, more concerted efforts are needed to address other sectors that affect women's health throughout their lives, including tuberculosis, malaria, nutrition, mental health and environmental hazards. The health rights of groups of vulnerable women also need further explicit consideration, for example, minorities, indigenous, the disabled, the old, the homeless, victims of trafficking, migrants, refugees and prisoners.**

193. **Involving men as active partners is essential to improving women's health. Governments should continue to inform, educate and raise awareness about gender equality among men, particularly in relation to reproductive health and violence against women.**

D. Violence against women

1. Introduction

194. The Platform for Action addressed different forms of violence against women: physical, sexual and psychological violence in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation/cutting and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; physical, sexual and psychological violence within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution; and physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State.[53]

195. The Platform identified three strategic objectives: to take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women; to study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures; and to eliminate trafficking in women and assistance to victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking. The Platform called on Governments to: implement international human rights norms and instruments relating to violence against women; adopt, implement and periodically review legislation on violence against women that emphasizes prevention of violence and prosecution of offenders;

protect women subjected to violence; and provide access to just and effective remedies.

196. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session (General Assembly resolution S-23/3) also called on Governments to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination and violence against women by any person, organization or enterprise, and to treat all forms of violence against women and girls as criminal offences.

197. Violence against women is now a priority on the national and international agenda. In their replies to the questionnaire, 129 countries reported on measures taken to eliminate violence against women and girls. Governments recognize that violence against women in all its forms must be combated through effective and comprehensive action.

198. This section focuses on measures to combat violence against women. Measures to address trafficking in women and girls and to combat violence against women in armed conflict are covered separately.

2. Achievements

International level

199. The General Assembly and the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, especially the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, have regularly adopted resolutions on violence against women. In 2003, for the first time, the Assembly adopted a resolution on the elimination of domestic violence against women,[54] adding this particular form of violence to its consideration of trafficking in women and girls, traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls, crimes committed against women in the name of honour and the elimination of all forms of violence against women. The Assembly also requested a study on all forms of violence against women for submission to the sixtieth session of the Assembly in 2005.[55]

200. The International Day for the Eradication of Violence against Women, 25 November, adopted by the General Assembly in 1999, now regularly forms the backdrop for public debate at the national level, and is also the first of "16 days of activism against gender violence", a global campaign spearheaded by NGOs in all regions since 1991.

201. In the Millennium Declaration, Heads of State and Government resolved to combat all forms of violence against women. The outcome document of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in 2001, noted the intersection of discrimination on grounds of race and gender. In the same year, the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS recognized the need to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls as a way to reduce their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. The Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in 2002, drew attention to the vulnerability of older women to physical and psychological abuse, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development held the same year, acknowledged the importance of eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women. At its twenty-seventh special session on children, also held in 2002, the General

Assembly pledged to promote the human rights of girls to live free from coercion, harmful practices and sexual exploitation.

202. United Nations human rights mechanisms cover violence against women with increasing regularity. The treaty bodies consider violence against women in their dialogues with States parties and in their concluding comments and observations. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in particular, systematically and comprehensively monitors action to prevent violence against women, punish perpetrators and provide protection and support for victims. The Committee calls for immediate protection and redress for victims of violence. It encourages States parties to raise public awareness and improve the skills of law enforcement officials, the judiciary, health-care providers and social workers. It also calls for better data, disaggregated by sex, and further study on the scope and prevalence of violence against women.

203. Among the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences,[56] has made significant contributions through her analytical work and country visits.[57] Other special procedures have contributed to increased awareness of harmful traditional practices, sexual slavery and other forms of violence against women.

204. At regional level, the European Union programme of community action for 2000-2003 (the Daphne programme)[58] has been extended for 2004-2008. On 11 July 2003, the African Union adopted the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, which requires African Governments to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

205. Among actions to assist developing countries, the Netherlands, in cooperation with other donors and the United Nations, has supported national efforts to eliminate honour crimes. The United States of America has funded projects to combat domestic violence and female genital mutilation/cutting in several Latin American and African States. The United Kingdom has been a major contributor to the United Nations Trust Fund for the Elimination of Violence against Women. France and the Netherlands are providing financial support for the preparation of the Secretary-General's study on violence against women.

National level

206. Several States from the Latin American and Caribbean region reported that becoming party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provided the incentive to become party to the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), which, as of 27 September 2004, had been ratified by 31 Member States from the region.

207. While the general provisions of the criminal codes of many countries cover acts of violence against women, many States now also have in place specific and comprehensive legislation on violence against women. As more countries realize that violence by family members is the most frequent form of violence affecting women, a growing number of national legal systems treat it as seriously as violence by strangers. Many countries have adopted or amended legislation on domestic violence, often in conformity with regional or international norms, as in Costa Rica, Kyrgyzstan and the Philippines. The Kyrgyz law of 2003 was the result of an

initiative by NGOs, which collected the 30,000 signatures necessary to introduce draft legislation in Parliament, the first-ever use of this mechanism. Some countries are in the process of drafting legislation on domestic violence.

208. A growing number of States, including Belize, Chile, Croatia, Guinea, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Namibia and Zimbabwe, now incorporate marital rape in their criminal codes. Courts have also contributed to protecting women against marital rape. In France the criminal chamber of the High Court of Appeal has twice recognized the existence of marital rape; and a landmark court decision in Nepal affirmed that rape within marriage is a criminal act and is in contravention of the Convention.

209. Legislation on violence against women frequently includes provisions for more effective prosecution. Some countries, such as Slovakia, can prosecute offenders even without the victim's agreement. Several countries have increased penalties. Egypt amended its legislation to ensure that a rapist can no longer escape punishment by marrying the victim. In other countries, violence carries a harsher punishment if it is committed by a family member. Some countries have expedited legal proceedings to deal with violence against women, for instance, China, which has created a special panel of judges to expedite domestic violence cases. Elsewhere, courts are mandated to protect victims of domestic violence and provide specialized services for them. In court, some countries, including Finland and Japan, allow victims and witnesses to be examined via video link; ensure anonymity during trials (United Kingdom), and restrict public access to courtrooms (Finland and Nepal). In some countries, only female police officers may take the statements of women victims. A number of countries provide legal aid, especially in criminal proceedings.

210. Restraining or protection orders are now available to victims of domestic violence in many countries in all regions. While such orders are usually issued by a court, Austria also authorizes police officers to issue a temporary barring order.

211. A number of States have introduced legislation on specific forms of violence against women. Jordan has eliminated impunity for so-called honour killings, although the law recognizes extenuating circumstances. Others, including Luxembourg and Tunisia, have revoked impunity for killing a wife taken in adultery. At least nine additional African countries have outlawed female genital mutilation/cutting, as have some countries with immigrant populations where such practices are performed. In Denmark and the United Kingdom, it is now possible to prosecute nationals as well as residents for female genital mutilation/cutting performed abroad, even if it is not a crime in the country concerned. Several countries have criminalized early or forced marriage, including Burkina Faso, Cyprus, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Sweden and Viet Nam. India, Nepal and the Republic of Korea have criminalized prenatal sex selection.

212. Several countries have enacted laws against sexual harassment or stalking, usually aimed at prevention as well as redress. In some States, including Peru, sexual harassment has been made punishable in the workplace, in educational institutions, the armed forces and the police. Norway now prohibits sexual harassment in all areas of society.

213. Some States now have legislative protection against violence for vulnerable groups of women and women subject to multiple forms of discrimination. For

instance in the Netherlands, women migrants who have a dependant's residency permit can now obtain independent residency if they are victims of sexual violence within a relationship. Germany has improved the protection of disabled women who are victims of violence.

214. In addition to legislation against violence, many countries deal with this issue in national action plans to improve the status of women and promoting gender equality. Specific plans of action on violence against women have also been adopted by at least 25 countries in regions of the world. Some countries have specific strategies against a particular form of violence, such as harmful traditional practices (Mauritania), female genital mutilation/cutting (Guinea, Sweden and the United Republic of Tanzania) and domestic/family violence. Other States have included the fight against violence against women in their national development plans (Colombia and Liberia), national plans against poverty (Algeria), national plans on public security (Brazil) or policies and plans of action on health (Brazil and Uganda).

215. At least 50 countries have established institutional mechanisms to monitor or facilitate implementation of policies on violence against women. Over 30 States have created mechanisms with a specific mandate to deal with violence against women. For instance, Mali has established a national Committee of Action on the Eradication of Traditional Practices which are Harmful to Women and Girls. In Andorra, a protocol for action in cases of domestic violence was signed in 2001 to improve the coordination of actions taken by agents involved in combating domestic violence. At least 15 countries have also created dedicated police units or added gender desks to police stations.

216. Governments now widely recognize the pivotal role of NGOs in all aspects of the fight against violence against women. They often include NGO representatives in governmental task forces and provide funding for NGO support services, outreach and awareness-raising.

217. Countries have undertaken data collection and research, using the results to inform policy and programme development. At least 17 States have carried out statistical work, while some 30 States in all regions have studied various forms of violence, including battery, sexual assault, domestic violence, violence against children and female genital mutilation/cutting. For example, an in-depth study in the Netherlands reviewed Dutch policy on violence against women and suggested ways to improve it. In Lesotho, research was undertaken to determine the prevalence of different forms of gender-based violence and its effects on the well-being of the individual as well as on development.

218. Governments recognize the importance of preventing violence and have implemented many public information, education and awareness-raising campaigns and capacity-building initiatives, as well as rehabilitation programmes for offenders to avoid a recurrence.

219. Most countries have produced print, radio, TV and film material and held conferences, workshops and seminars, often in cooperation with NGOs. Some have used the occasion of International Women's Day to hold public discussions on the unacceptability of violence against women.

220. Countries have undertaken successful awareness-raising campaigns on particular forms of violence, for instance on domestic violence, and harmful traditional practices. The United Republic of Tanzania was successful in changing

people's attitudes towards female genital mutilation/cutting: some practitioners laid down their tools, while parents and elders publicly denounced the practice and initiated alternative rites of passage. In Gambia, intensive awareness-raising efforts on female genital mutilation/cutting have led to an open discussion of this hitherto sensitive issue at all levels of society.

221. Some countries targeted women from minority groups and immigrant communities: for example, in Belgium an information brochure on violence against women was translated into 12 languages. Others, for example Costa Rica, have targeted disabled persons.

222. Acknowledging the important role of men and boys in combating violence against women, campaigns in several countries encouraged men and boys to adopt a tolerant, gender-sensitive attitude. Campaigns in the Philippines and Thailand invited male government officials, including members of the Cabinet, the Parliament and the judiciary, to wear a white ribbon as a symbol of their opposition to men's violence against women.

223. Many countries have given priority to building capacity among professionals dealing with violence against women, for example, through seminars and continuing education for government officials and training for journalists to improve news reporting about violence against women. Some countries developed manuals, guidelines and other education materials for training and self-study. For instance, China developed a training manual for public social workers on combating domestic violence.

224. Efforts to prevent sexual harassment have included use of the International Labour Organization (ILO) guidelines to prevent and eradicate sexual harassment at work. In Paraguay the Central Única de Trabajadores sponsored a campaign against sexual harassment with support from the Women's Coordination Unit, the municipality of Asunción and other organizations.

225. Prevention measures increasingly include rehabilitation of offenders: some countries provide psychological treatment and gender-sensitivity training. For instance, in Luxembourg, an anonymous telephone counselling service for men was set up in December 2003 under the Daphne programme adopted by the European Parliament. Costa Rica set up an inter-institutional technical commission to design a model for adult offenders.

226. Many countries have set up or expanded shelters, temporary accommodation, crisis centres, telephone hotlines or a combination of services for victims. There are an increasing number of programmes providing medical, psychological, social, legal and economic assistance. In South Africa, Thuthzela care centres have been established in order to centralize all necessary services for victims of sexual offences, thus ensuring that victims do not endure the additional trauma of travelling to different service providers to receive assistance. Some countries provide job-training courses and income-generating activities for abused women. Innovations include a Norwegian project to provide police security alarms for all women threatened with violence by former partners. Some countries have sought to ensure that victim assistance services are available to minority and immigrant women. In Canada during 1999-2000, 63 per cent of shelters for abused women provided culturally sensitive services to aboriginal women.

3. Obstacles and challenges

227. Among the most frequently mentioned challenges is the lack of reliable and comparable sex-disaggregated statistical data and information, compounded by insufficient research and studies.

228. The lack of specific legislation on violence against women is also an obstacle to effectively combat violence against women in all its forms, as reported by Benin, Madagascar, Mali, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

229. Legal protections still fall short, despite extensive recent work. Poland noted that failure to remove a violent husband from the conjugal home continues to force women to seek protection in shelters. In some countries, including Brazil, rape and sexual assault are still considered to be crimes against custom or public morality rather than offences against the person, and penalties are low.

230. Even where legislation exists, implementation may be inadequate. In the Russian Federation, alcohol and drug abuse are major causes of violence against women, but laws are poorly enforced. In some countries, including Kenya and Uganda, failure to conform to international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, are impediments to successfully curbing violence.

231. In many countries, law enforcement systems are not gender-sensitive, and police and criminal justice officials often fail to recognize the serious nature of violence against women. In Brazil, judges tend not to find aggressors guilty if the victim of a sexual crime is less than the stereotyped "honest woman". In Egypt, cultural trends affect the fairness of some judges, which often prevents battered women from filing complaints. Although Peru has trained justice personnel on violence against women and women's human rights, rapid turnover militates against permanence and continuity.

232. The complexity of court procedures and the lack of family courts or other competent tribunals can impede women's access to justice (Ecuador and Philippines). Women, especially if they are poor, do not know their rights, and have difficulty starting legal proceedings because they have no legal assistance. Women can be reluctant to report incidents and seek help, as the result of social stigma, mistrust of the criminal justice system or a hostile environment, or because women believe that a man has a right to beat a woman, especially for disobedience to husbands, fathers or brothers. Professionals working on violence against women may be poorly trained, and several countries lack support measures such as shelters, hotlines, referral centres, and witness protection. Only a few States try to rehabilitate perpetrators.

233. National machineries for the advancement of women may be weak (Honduras and the Philippines), or the weakness may be in other institutions dealing with violence against women (Mauritania), the lack of local and provincial policies on violence (Ecuador) or the absence of gender mainstreaming in programmes aimed at combating violence.

234. Several countries reported lack of resources. Government decisions have often failed to translate into budget appropriations. Some States recognize that the shortage of resources for NGOs presents an obstacle. Several countries are

hampered by poor coordination and cooperation among the different agencies and actors.

235. At least 13 responses reported that male authority and women's subordination are deeply rooted in society, including legislative bodies (Palestine) and the judiciary (Peru). Customs such as forcible feeding in Mauritania, bride theft in Kyrgyzstan, the dowry system and widowhood rites in the Central African Republic and early marriage in India and the Syrian Arab Republic perpetuate patriarchal attitudes. Despite education about harmful traditional practices and other forms of violence against women, public awareness remains limited in other countries. Media coverage may be provocative, or the media may fail to take an interest in the issue (Luxembourg and Turkey). Women's economic and financial dependence on the income of their husband was also considered to be a challenge to the effective eradication of domestic violence, as for example in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

4. Conclusions

236. **Countries have made much progress in the past decade in combating violence against women. Violence against women in all its forms, including domestic violence and harmful traditional practices, is now recognized as a form of gender-based discrimination and a violation of women's human rights. Many countries have introduced legal provisions to combat it, made efforts to prevent it through education, awareness raising and capacity-building and worked to assist its victims, often in cooperation with NGOs.**

237. **Better understanding of the causes and consequences of violence will permit countries to design appropriate strategies against it. Countries increasingly recognize the value of a comprehensive approach and are coordinating their policies and plans of action. Perpetrators have become a focus of attention, while penalties are becoming commensurate with the gravity of the crime. Gender-sensitive rehabilitation programmes seek to prevent future crimes.**

238. **Governments should accelerate their efforts towards implementation of comprehensive strategies against violence, adequately funded and with a clear time frame. Strategies should include comprehensive legislative frameworks; protection for victims; assistance and legal aid, as needed, and access to shelters and other services with trained staff. Vulnerable women, including women living in rural and remote areas, need protection from violence. Victims and women at risk of being victims of domestic violence should have immediate means of redress and protection, including barring orders that remove the perpetrator from the conjugal home.**

239. **Constant effort is required to eliminate the gender stereotypes and cultural attitudes that perpetuate notions of women's inferiority and are responsible for society's acceptance of violence against women. In this regard, countries urgently need education and advocacy to raise awareness among all members of society, including men and boys, who should be co-opted as agents for change. Government and NGOs should be partners in combating violence against women.**

240. **Countries need better, sex-disaggregated data to obtain a clearer picture of the extent of violence against women, and monitoring mechanisms to assess policy impact and effectiveness.**

E. Women and armed conflict

1. Introduction

241. The Platform for Action set out six strategic objectives: to increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation; to reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments; to promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations; to promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace; to provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women; and to provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-self-governing territories.

242. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session reaffirmed the Platform for Action and called for the full participation of women in decision-making at all levels in peace processes, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It also addressed the need to increase the protection of girls in armed conflict, especially the prohibition of forced recruitment.

243. Sixty-two States and one observer responded. Responses of Member States under critical areas of concern D, violence against women, and I, human rights of women, also have a bearing on this area.

2. Achievements

International level

244. Initiatives on women and peace and security have increased, addressing violence against women and the need to end impunity for perpetrators, enhancing women's participation in efforts related to peace and security and further clarifying and responding to the gender dimensions of conflict.

245. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security was a landmark. The resolution called for women's equal participation with men and their full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It reaffirmed the need to protect women and girls from human rights abuses, including gender-based violence. The resolution also called for action to mainstream gender perspectives in relation to conflict prevention, peace negotiations and the aftermath of conflicts.

246. The Security Council has held several open debates, most recently in October 2004, to discuss progress and challenges in implementation. Three presidential statements (in 2001, 2002 and 2004) recognized the link between peace and gender equality and called for action to implement the resolution by those concerned and for an end to the culture of impunity. In 2004, for example, the Security Council raised gender concerns and included specific mandates for the protection of women and children in its resolutions on operations and missions in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire,

Haiti and Liberia. Members of the Council now also regularly meet with local women's groups during Council missions. The Secretary-General's study mandated by resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent reports[59] supported the Council's work in this area.

247. Efforts to end the culture of impunity for crimes committed against women, especially sexual and gender-based violence, have intensified. The International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda broke new ground in the area of jurisprudence on sexual violence under international law by convicting individuals of rape as an instrument of genocide, a form of torture and a crime against humanity.[60] The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court takes gender concerns into account in the definition of the crimes of genocide (article 6), crimes against humanity (article 7) and war crimes (article 8). It also provides for better investigation of gender-based crimes and a victims and witnesses unit, including staff with expertise in crimes of sexual violence. Seven of the 18 judges of the International Criminal Court are women. The Court subsequently elected women to serve as first and second Vice-Presidents. In addition, the Court's Deputy Prosecutor is a woman.

248. Building on these achievements, the statute of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, established in January 2002, includes rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy and any other form of sexual violence among the constituent elements of crimes against humanity. The Court also has jurisdiction in regard to violations of article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and of Additional Protocol II. Article 5 gives the Special Court jurisdiction over crimes under Sierra Leonean law, including offences relating to the abuse of girls under the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act of 1926. The statute has provisions on gender-sensitive proceedings and evidence before the Special Court (articles 14 and 16) and requires expertise in trauma related to crimes of sexual violence and violence against children. In May 2004, for the first time in the history of international law, the Special Court decided that forced marriage would be prosecuted as an "inhumane act", that is, a crime against humanity.

249. Since 2000, the Economic and Social Council has paid specific attention to the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. The Council also continued its regular review of the situation of Palestinian women. The Commission on the Status of Women has regularly dealt with the situation of women taken hostage during armed conflict. The Commission considered the question of women and armed conflict in 1998. In 2004, it paid particular attention to peace agreements as a means for promoting gender equality and to women's participation in post-conflict electoral processes. The Commission on Human Rights and several of its special procedures also have continued to address this critical area of concern. Thematic and country-specific rapporteurs, including those on violence against women, torture, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, have all addressed gender-based and sexual violence committed during armed conflict.

250. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has stated its concerns about implementation of the Convention in its constructive dialogue within countries in conflict or emerging from conflict. In such instances, the Committee has addressed women's participation in decision-making, violence against women and women's economic and social well-being in relation to conflict.

251. Furthermore, the Committee expressed solidarity with the women of Afghanistan in 2002 and called for the participation of Afghan women as full and equal partners with men in the reconstruction and development of the country. In 2003, and again in 2004, the Committee stressed the need for women in Iraq to be full and equal participants in all post-war reconstruction activities.

252. In December 2000, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the role of women in the peaceful resolution of conflicts (2000/2025 (INI)). At the Ministerial Conference of the Council of Europe held in Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in January 2003, Ministers adopted a resolution and an action programme concerning the gender perspective and the role of women and men in conflict prevention, conflict-resolution and in post-conflict reconstruction.

National level

253. The increased attention to women's participation in peace processes has created more opportunities for women and women's organizations to contribute to the prevention of conflict and to participate in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and peace negotiations. Governments increasingly supported initiatives to enhance participation by women in efforts to maintain and consolidate peace. Several countries (including Argentina, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Denmark, Iceland, Nepal, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom) confirmed women's essential role in preventing conflict and promoting peace and stressed the need for women's participation in peace processes, including negotiations. Some, including Azerbaijan and Malawi, reported that this area of concern was prominent in their national action plans or strategies for the advancement of women.

254. Women themselves have taken an active part in formal peace processes. For example, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Malawi, who is a woman, has been involved in a number of peace negotiations, including those in Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe.

255. Governments acting as mediators have increased women's participation in peace processes. Norway, as impartial facilitator between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, supported the establishment of a subcommittee to help focus on gender issues in the peace process. Other Governments, such as that of the United Kingdom, encouraged men and boys to engage positively with women in conflict situations.

256. Women's leadership in peace processes has become more visible through their work in civil society. NGOs, often working across borders and ethnic or religious divides, have assisted victims and brought the concerns of women and girls in armed conflict to national and international prominence.

257. Governments increasingly welcomed these efforts. Guinea and Liberia suggested that the Mano River Women's Peace Network, which brings together women from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, were instrumental in achieving relative peace in the subregion. The Network won the United Nations prize in the field of human rights in 2003. Women's non-governmental and religious organizations in the Central African Republic prepared a peace memorandum for their country and held a peace march on International Women's Day 2002. The

Congo welcomed proposals by the Federation of African Women for Peace and incorporated them into peace programmes. Women's NGOs contributed to the inter-Congolese dialogue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2002 and 2003, as well as to the national reconciliation process in the Comoros.

258. Local women's NGOs with international support cooperated with Governments in a project for preventing conflicts and establishing peace in the Southern Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Women's Movement of Cyprus organized peaceful marches and helped create channels of communication between the two communities on that island. Women's groups in Ireland have worked to restore peace and promote good community relations and have also supported women in conflict situations in other parts of the world. In the Philippines, the Mindanao Commission on Women drew up a position paper on the peace agreement between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and began dialogues on how women in the different religious communities could help in conflict resolution. NGOs in several countries, including in Uganda, have documented women's experiences of armed conflict.

259. Donor countries (including Belgium, Canada, Japan, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States) have assisted women's peace and conflict resolution initiatives in countries and regions in conflict (including Afghanistan, the Great Lakes region of Africa, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Guatemala, Iraq, the Palestine territories, Sudan and Sri Lanka) either directly or through national and international NGOs and United Nations entities. They also encouraged women's participation in rebuilding countries emerging from conflict.

260. Governments have sought to protect women and children in conflict situations around the world, for example, the United States, through assistance to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Congo established commissions to collect weapons. Uganda adopted a children's statute and a law establishing the national children's council. Croatia included rape as a war crime in its penal code. Austria, during its presidency of the Human Security Network, initiated the preparation of a political document for the protection of women and children in armed conflicts and encouraged the participation of girls and young women in establishing permanent peace following conflicts. Countries have also mitigated the effects of conflicts on women and provided special support for victims, including legal, medical and psychological assistance (Central African Republic). Other countries, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal and Viet Nam, provided special housing, economic and income generation support for widows.

261. Several donor countries integrated gender dimensions into their assistance for conflict prevention and resolution: programmes mainly addressed women's role in conflict prevention and support for women in post-conflict situations. Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg and Sweden supported countries emerging from conflict to promote women's human rights and fundamental freedoms. Others, including Japan and Canada, placed their efforts within a larger human security framework. Governments, including Germany and Sweden, have adopted strategies and guidelines for their assistance to conflict prevention, management and peacebuilding. Donor Governments also noted their support to entities of the United Nations system in supporting women and child victims of conflict, enhancing

women's participation in conflict resolution and supporting women to build and maintain peace. The United States funded over 200 projects in Afghanistan to support education and access to health care; strengthen civil society; encourage women's political participation; and create economic opportunities. In cooperation with the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs, it allocated funds to construct women's resource centres throughout the country.

262. A number of countries (Argentina, Denmark, Germany, Iceland and Portugal) ensured that women military personnel and civilian police joined in peacekeeping operations. While women's participation was voluntary, some Governments, including Germany, considered that their participation contributed to the better implementation of the mandate of such missions.

263. Germany and the United Kingdom worked to mainstream gender issues into the mandates of new United Nations peacekeeping missions, while Norway supported the inclusion of gender units in peacekeeping operations. Several Member States, including Argentina, Finland, Norway and Sweden, trained their peacekeeping personnel in gender sensitivity and awareness, provided codes of conduct, monitored adherence and punished violations. Canada and the United Kingdom collaborated with United Nations entities in the development of web-based training materials to mainstream gender issues in peacekeeping. In 2003, Iceland gave a grant to the University of Iceland to study mainstreaming gender equality in Icelandic peacekeeping operations.

264. Member States, including Germany, New Zealand and Ireland, have expanded opportunities for women in national defence forces. Since women are not generally subject to compulsory service (one exception was Israel), their numbers in the armed forces remain low (for example 3 per cent in Germany and Latvia, 9 per cent in Ireland), and even lower at the top levels. Governments, including Denmark, New Zealand and Norway, introduced long-term recruitment strategies, information campaigns and special events to attract more women to the armed forces. Croatia's defence act of 2002 led to the establishment of a Gender Equality Board to realize equal opportunities and treatment for women and men in the armed forces. Sweden conducted studies and prepared measures to combat sexual harassment in the armed forces, while Israel established a mechanism to deal with violence against women in the armed forces. Mali has appointed a high-level military officer to consider issues of women and children within the armed forces.

265. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) galvanized the efforts of countries to address the gender dimensions of conflict and enhance women's participation in peace processes. A number of States (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) reported specific actions. Several countries, including Azerbaijan, Canada, Norway and the Netherlands, established mechanisms to ensure domestic and international follow-up to resolution 1325 (2000). The regional project on women for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the Southern Caucasus also relates to resolution 1325 (2000).

266. The Platform for Action and subsequent instruments, including Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), called for more comprehensive and gender-sensitive support for refugee and displaced women, especially those who have suffered gender-based persecution. Twenty-three Member States provided information about their efforts. Some States have enacted or amended laws

concerning refugees and asylum seekers: for example, Canada and Finland consider gender-related persecution as a possible criterion for granting asylum. Some countries have provided legal protection and economic and social support and have moved to protect refugee women from violence (Croatia, Kyrgyzstan and the United Republic of Tanzania). Refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania are assisted and protected within the Tanzanian Refugee Act. Countries have also addressed the psychological needs of refugee women and asylum seekers. Other countries, such as Eritrea, have provided assistance to internally displaced persons, in cooperation with donors, United Nations entities and NGOs. Several countries, including Slovakia, set up employment and job creation projects for refugee women. Some States, for example Canada, assisted refugee women victims of violence.

267. Donors, including Japan and the United States, supported the United Nations system and other international organizations that provide humanitarian aid to refugee and displaced women.

268. Several States, including Azerbaijan, Croatia, Kyrgyzstan and the Syrian Arab Republic, have expanded educational curricula on international humanitarian law. Steps have also been taken to expand capacity for conflict prevention and resolution and the development of a culture of peace (Tunisia). Lebanon disseminated information and publicity on international humanitarian and human rights conventions as well as on rules on the protection of women in armed conflict. Countries have also encouraged the media to highlight the positive role of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

269. A number of Member States, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium and Egypt, have organized or supported conferences for Governments, non-state actors and women's NGOs to discuss conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Ecuador researched the effects of conflict on women as the basis for government policy. Egypt's First Lady launched the Suzanne Mubarak International Movement for Peace to fight violence and advocate tolerance. Countries from the region participated in the Forum on Arab Women and Armed Conflict, held in 2004 in Beirut, on the impact of armed conflict on women in the region.

3. Obstacles and challenges

270. Despite these efforts, considerable obstacles remain. Several Governments, including Brazil, Ecuador, Lebanon and the Philippines, noted that armed conflict tended to exacerbate discrimination against women, including violence, and placed further burdens on women responsible for family survival. Women's overall position in society had to be strengthened through promotion of women's education and literacy and their participation in the political and economic spheres so that they may play an active role in conflict prevention (Luxembourg). Others, such as Nigeria, were concerned that women were not involved in consultations for peace. The Democratic Republic of the Congo noted a lack of adequate legislation and the need to support women and girls victims of violence and to bring to justice the perpetrators of such violence.

271. Several countries, including Cyprus, Egypt, Liberia and Nepal, noted the absence of gender balance in decision-making structures and processes and peace negotiations. Absence of women from leadership positions in formal peace processes reduced their impact at the grass-roots level (Cyprus). At the same time, Governments, including Liberia and Nepal, were concerned that lack of adequate

support for women's groups prevented them from effectively contributing to peace processes.

272. Some countries, including Iceland, noted the low number of women in international peacekeeping operations. Latvia and Norway noted that compulsory military service applied to men only. In Norway, the question had been raised whether such a system might be regarded as discrimination on grounds of sex.

273. A number of countries highlighted the particular challenges and disadvantages faced by refugee and displaced women, especially in access to health-care services, employment, education and acceptable living conditions (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Eritrea, Lebanon and Malawi). Refugee women were also at particular risk from violence in many forms. Inadequate or non-existent law enforcement further weakened their situation.

4. Conclusions

274. **Some progress has been made in the area of women and armed conflict. The collective commitment of the international community, Governments, NGOs and civil society groups is visible in the expansion of the normative and policy framework, as well as in the emerging jurisprudence of international tribunals. Violations of the rights of women are also more systematically documented and reported. The contribution of women's civil society organizations in the prevention of conflict, as mediators and peacebuilders is increasingly recognized. Humanitarian assistance is more prompt and effective.**

275. **Awareness and policy commitments have not always translated into tangible improvements for women in conflict situations. Few women are involved in formal peace processes: absence or underrepresentation limits their effectiveness in setting the agenda. Deeper knowledge of the impact on women and girls of all phases of armed conflict and its aftermath is not yet consistently and systematically applied in practice. Violence against women in armed conflict continues unabated. A stronger international legal framework to end impunity and ensure accountability has so far resulted in only a few guilty verdicts. The continuing disregard of humanitarian law by parties involved in conflict perpetuates gender-based violence in new conflicts.**

276. **Sustained efforts are therefore necessary to stop all forms of violence against women in armed conflict, end impunity and bring perpetrators to justice. Governments must give sustained support to international tribunals.**

277. **New and consistent approaches are needed to increase women's full and effective participation in all aspects of peace processes. Women active at the grass-roots level need new opportunities to participate in conflict prevention and resolution, for example financial and logistical support to enhance their mediation, awareness-raising and lobbying efforts. Countries should also increase the number of women in military, police and civilian peace operations through innovative recruitment and the expansion of career opportunities for women.**

F. Women and the economy

1. Introduction

278. The Beijing Platform for Action examined issues related to the promotion of women's economic rights and independence. It underscored challenges and opportunities for women as a result of globalization and called for further analysis of the impact of globalization on women's economic status. It endorsed gender mainstreaming as a strategy for promoting equality between women and men, including in addressing the economic potential and independence of women. In addition, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session emphasized the importance of gender mainstreaming in key macroeconomic and social development policies and national development programmes and the importance of women in macroeconomic decision-making.

279. All Government responses to the questionnaire dealt with women and the economy. Most countries addressed women's participation in the economy as one of their top priorities for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women.

2. Achievements

280. The Monterrey Consensus, adopted at the International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002, emphasized the importance of a holistic approach to financing for development, including attention to gender perspectives. It recognized the importance of microfinance and credit for micro-, small- and medium-size enterprises for women as well as the need to reinforce national efforts in capacity-building in gender-sensitive budget policies. The Conference urged businesses to take into account the developmental, social, gender and environmental implications of their undertakings. To strengthen the effectiveness of the global economic system's support for development, the Conference encouraged gender mainstreaming in development policies at all levels and in all sectors.[61]

281. The 2003 Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society[62] encouraged the development of best practices for e-workers and e-employees, built on principles of gender equality, the promotion of teleworking to increase employment opportunities for women and balanced and diverse portrayals of women and men by the media.

282. The São Paulo Consensus, adopted at the eleventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 2004, recognized that gender equality is essential for sustained economic growth, poverty eradication and employment creation. UNCTAD was requested to support developing countries in analysing appropriate linkages between trade and gender equality.[63]

283. Several conventions of the International Labour Organization address gender perspectives in the labour market. For example, Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour (1999) calls for effective and time-bound measures to take into account the special situation of girls. Convention No. 183 on maternity protection (2000) regulates 14 weeks of maternity leave, of which six weeks have to be taken after childbirth.

284. A number of Member States reported that globalization in the form of transformation of production patterns, accelerated technology innovation and macroeconomic policies, including structural adjustment and privatization,

continued to present both opportunities and challenges. Women suffered from increased poverty and unemployment, deteriorating working conditions and social security and lower public expenditures, but they also saw benefits in the form of jobs, incomes, trade and investment markets. However, in many countries, only the few educated and multi-skilled women enjoyed these benefits. Low-skilled women workers were especially vulnerable to job instability, low incomes without employee benefits, heavy workloads, long hours and hazardous working environments.

285. Some countries reported specific steps to address the effects of globalization and macroeconomic policies on women. For example, Ethiopia carried out a pilot project in which retrenched women were organized and trained. The Philippines carried out a survey in one export processing zone to determine the needs of women workers and their children for housing schemes, day care centres and facilities for health and education. In response to the negative effects of devaluation on women, Mali established a fund to support women's activities. Tashkent University of Information Technologies in Uzbekistan set up a centre to enhance women's skills in this area.

286. Many countries promoted employment among different groups of women: young women; older women; indigenous women; ethnic minority groups; immigrants; women in remote and rural areas; women heads of household; single women; pregnant teenagers; victims of abuse; ex-offenders; homeless women; alcohol and drug addicts; and women with disabilities. Slovakia made special efforts to reduce the long-term unemployment of Roma women.

287. Interventions targeted women at critical points in their lives: young women making their first career plans; mothers re-entering the labour force; women wishing to change professions, and unemployed women. Uruguay reported on the impact of a pilot programme on women's employability: through the programme, 66 per cent of women became more aware of their potential and the constraints in finding and holding a job. Most countries used training, retraining, and counselling for these purposes, improving women's skills, competitiveness, employability, professional mobility and opportunities to find or obtain better jobs, as well as addressing psychological barriers. For example, Egypt encouraged women to take the International Computer Driving License.

288. A large number of countries amended discriminatory employment laws. A growing body of laws, policies and programmes addressed discrimination based on occupational segregation, pay differentials between women and men, sexual harassment and discrimination against pregnant and nursing women. Some countries also paid attention to the elimination of female child labour.

289. A number of countries established gender equality committees, commissions, boards and ombudsman's offices. All such bodies monitored laws on gender equality in employment, but some were also in charge of responding to complaints of gender discrimination from the public.

290. Several countries made specific efforts to guide women into traditionally male-dominated sectors, such as science and technology, engineering, industry, medicine, carpentry, auto-mechanics, building and park maintenance, armed forces and the police. Cuba reported a trend towards the feminization of the technical workforce as a result of such activities. In 2003, Israel sponsored an extensive public awareness campaign on the status of women in the areas of science and

academia. France, Iceland and Malawi encouraged men to enter female-dominated occupations such as childcare, nursing, midwifery and social work. Some countries attempted to challenge gender stereotypes in education and training and to influence workplace culture. Some Governments collaborated with the private sector to promote a change of attitude and management.

291. A number of countries took steps towards setting up gender-sensitive pension plans. Countries reported two main approaches to helping women secure their retirement. The first was to make up some or all of women's contribution to pension funds during periods of child-rearing. The second approach was to introduce "catch-up" contributions to enable women to qualify for a pension (such as in Jordan and the United States of America) or similar strategies.

292. A few countries reported specific measures to promote equality between women and men with respect to income taxes. Malaysia and Turkey, for example, made it possible for married women to file tax returns independently of their husbands.

293. With supportive legislation and policies in place, some countries observed that the gender pay gap narrowed over the last decade. Norway forwarded a partial explanation in its report, that women's work activity was increasingly similar to that of men's. The Government of Norway compared wages across occupational boundaries and collective wage agreements, and attempted to determine the types of work that were of equal value.

294. Many countries moved to close income gaps between women and men, for example by: legislating against pay discrimination; promoting equal pay standards through negotiations with trade unions and other means; and increasing public awareness. The Swedish Equal Opportunities Act of 2001 required employers and trade unions to assess wage differentials and rectify the differences within three years.

295. Some countries regulated against sexual harassment in the workplace with legal sanctions. In Slovenia, an employer who fails to ensure a harassment-free workplace is liable for damages. In Belgium and France, regulations reversed the burden of proof in favour of the person claiming sexual harassment. India and Malaysia enacted a code of conduct against sexual harassment.

296. Several countries reported measures to eliminate discrimination against pregnant and nursing women. Suriname made it possible for pregnant women to claim redress for dismissal. Algeria, Qatar, Slovenia and Tunisia gave women time off for breast feeding. Kyrgyzstan permitted employers to hire pregnant women and women with children under the age of 3 for overtime, night, weekend and holiday work, and to send them on business trips.

297. Some countries reported steps taken to eliminate child labour. Guatemala made efforts to raise the awareness of boys and girls about their rights. The Philippines produced a national report on girl-child labour.

298. About half of responding countries reported on legislation and policies to assist both women and men to reconcile work and family responsibilities. Measures included parental leave and benefits; support to parents re-entering the labour market; family-friendly corporate culture and working hours; support for childcare and dependent care; and family-friendly pension and tax schemes. Several countries

made legal provisions to enable women and men to reconcile work and family responsibilities, informing them and their employers about laws and policies and encouraging their use. Some countries also conduct research on work-life strategies, build local expertise and facilitate training.

299. Part-time work, flexible shifts and concentrated working hours are in increasing demand in many countries and can make a great difference to women's participation in the workforce, particularly for low-income families. Increasing use of ICT has encouraged this trend and created new forms of employment that allow women to telework or work from home, for example in Italy, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia.

300. Some countries granted part-time workers the same entitlements as full-time workers. The University Medical Centre in the Netherlands created two additional operating room teams so that parents with children could work during school hours only. Recognizing the problem of involuntary part-time work, Norway appointed a Committee to investigate the reasons for it, estimate its scope and, if necessary, put forward proposals to reduce it.

301. Some countries encouraged public and private sector employers to introduce flexible working arrangements. For example, the United Kingdom reported a marked improvement following a new law giving parents the right to apply for flexible working arrangements and obliging employers to give such requests serious consideration. The Clara Programme of Spain encouraged employers to give women victims of abuse jobs with flexible working hours or near their home.

302. While many countries now protect maternity rights, some enable both mothers and fathers to take parental leave. There is a wide variety of arrangements, paid and unpaid, and with varying lengths of leave. In Malta and Italy parents could stay home until the child was five and eight years old, respectively. In other countries, such as in Lebanon, the leave period differed between the private sector (seven weeks) and the public sector (60 days). In Sweden, parents can now work one hour less per day, with a parents' allowance for the hour not worked. With growing awareness of the father's role. several countries gave fathers more opportunities to share childcare. El Salvador held conferences and seminars to help men be responsible fathers.

303. A number of countries made efforts to improve parents' access to affordable childcare. Sweden now offers free care for children older than four years in public pre-schools. Jordan and Malaysia gave employers responsibility for providing workplace childcare centres. The Netherlands offered fiscal incentives to employers who contributed to the cost of employees' childcare.

304. Some countries made it possible for workers to stay home and care for other dependants. Workers in Malta can take unpaid responsibility leave of one year at a time to care for dependent parents or disabled children or spouses. Social programmes in Cuba provide full salary and a job guarantee for all working mothers with severely disabled children requiring constant care.

305. Micro, small and medium-size enterprises generate a large share of employment for both women and men. Countries established and supported women's networks, passed legislation and adopted policies to improve women's access to economic resources, financial services, training and technical support. Networks empowered women entrepreneurs by facilitating production and

marketing, providing training and capacity-building or exchanging experience and information. Women entrepreneurs from Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Ukraine collaborated on the use of ICT for business purposes, the legislative context, corporate responsibility and wider cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States.

306. A large number of countries provided financial services for women, including grants, soft loans, microcredit, savings schemes, insurance and money transfers. While some countries promoted access of women to mainstream microfinance, others introduced schemes specifically for poor women. In some countries, Governments provided microcredit services while others relied on non-governmental bodies, women's associations, local credit organizations or banks. In Angola and Guinea, informal networks with rotating funds, based on family and/or community solidarity and trust, were used to ensure women access to credit. In some cases, such as in the Dominican Republic, non-governmental bodies channelled government resources to women entrepreneurs.

307. Countries assisted micro, small and medium-size enterprises run by women. Most services went to rural women. These services catered for women in agriculture, food processing, fishing, small trading, handicrafts and services. Public policies facilitated women's access to financial services. Nepal, for example, licensed non-governmental financial intermediaries as "development banks" to extend credit to poor women. The Government of Malawi and other stakeholders approached the problem of women's lack of collateral by establishing a group system to guarantee loans to members.

308. In conjunction with microfinance and credit schemes, many countries provided vocational training, technical training and assistance for women entrepreneurs in developing and operating businesses and gave general support and advisory services. Egypt helped entrepreneurs to acquire skills, enhance their productivity and become aware of market pitfalls, while Iceland and Spain assisted potential entrepreneurs to prepare business plans. The Congo developed accounting and technical manuals and conducted management training for women's savings and loans banks.

309. Benin and other countries promoted women's participation in trade fairs. In Colombia, trade fair exhibitors and visitors were given gender-sensitive business training. A few countries provided advice on export plans, open marketing and sales channels and establishing permanent or seasonal markets. For example, in Malaysia, "CreativeWomen.com" provided an Internet platform for women to market their products and services. Bolivia and the United Republic of Tanzania helped women acquire standards of certification for their products and to access internal and external markets. Kuwait opened a women's stock market. Togo joined the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary Union to expand the access of women traders to subregional markets. Senegal took steps to facilitate women's access to international markets through the Internet.

310. Some countries granted tax privileges to women entrepreneurs. Japan created a credit line with tax privileges and exemption of collateral fees. In the United States of America, women benefited from tax relief that allowed small-business owners to retain earnings and use them for reinvestment and expansion.

311. Countries in Africa, Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean, promoted gender equality in access to land ownership, use, tenure and leasing. Some countries legislated to secure women's equal rights to land, ensuring for example that the names of both husband and wife appeared on land use certificates, whether they were legally married or not. China protected women's rights to leased land in the event of marriage or divorce. Eritrea trained 50 legal officers from various parts of the country to advocate for women's right to land ownership. In Liberia, women and girl children will be able to inherit property of their deceased male relatives. The Syrian Arab Republic prepared a series of booklets entitled "Know your Rights" that addressed inheritance among topics of particular relevance to women.

312. An increasing number of Governments took steps to mainstream gender perspectives into broad economic policies and programmes. Argentina mandated the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security to incorporate gender perspectives into all actions relating to employment and professional and technical guidance. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy of Nigeria required that gender perspectives be mainstreamed into planning and budgeting processes. Some countries appointed gender focal points in ministries dealing with economic issues. For example, the Congo appointed gender focal points in the Ministry of Commerce and Trade.

313. Some countries reported on steps taken to collect, make available and use employment data and indicators disaggregated by sex. For example, the Syrian Arab Republic updated indicators and statistics used to monitor progress towards gender equality in the formal and informal sector. South Africa developed a set of long and short-term performance indicators, including the full recognition of women's work and contribution to the national economy, including in the informal sector and subsistence economy. The National Sample Survey of India on employment and unemployment (1999-2000) yielded new data on the size and characteristics of home-based workers. Censuses in Germany and Nepal generated gender-specific information on enterprise start-ups and ownership of resources, respectively. Time-use surveys in several countries documented time spent by women and men in paid and unpaid labour. Some countries reported studies of gender discrimination in the labour market, for example an urban survey of gender perspectives on remuneration and the cost of labour in Mexico and a handbook based on gender analysis of 39 collective agreements among metal and textile workers in Austria.

3. Obstacles and challenges

314. Despite these achievements, many challenges remain to achieving gender equality in the economy. Horizontal segregation of the labour market limits career choices and keeps women in low-paid sectors. The prevalence of part-time work also limits professional opportunities and development. Countries found that vertical segregation was an obstacle to women's participation in economic policy and decision-making in the public sector, as well as in managerial and decision-making positions in the private sector. Norway noted that one of the remaining gaps in gender equality related to male dominance in economic decision-making, especially in the private sector.

315. The education and skills, including technical skills, of women, in particular in rural areas, are inadequate or ill-adapted to market needs, constraining their economic participation. For example, Viet Nam noted the need for knowledge and

skills among women, especially in rural and mountainous areas, to improve their capacity to participate in economic activity.

316. Many countries indicated that lack of childcare holds back women's participation in employment and training, especially given the uneven division of labour in the household. The multiple roles of women reduced their mobility and contributed to employers' perception that women were less available for employment. Andorra and Madagascar noted women's difficulties in balancing working life with family responsibilities. In Zimbabwe, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS has worsened the economic status of women as they are further burdened with the care of the sick. Prolonged absence from the workforce for child-rearing or other reasons made women's qualifications outdated. Stereotyped gender attitudes in the workplace made it more difficult for fathers to take parental leave than it was for mothers.

317. Limited access to productive resources continued to restrict women's participation in economic activities, particularly in rural areas. In Botswana and Malawi, lack of assets prevented women from entering high-value businesses requiring investment, consigning them to less productive activities in the informal sector. Belize, Brazil, the Central African Republic and Kenya emphasized the limited capacity of microfinance, including microcredit. Credit was limited in coverage and amount. Benin noted that the lending time frame of credit was ill-adapted to women's activities. Women's weak savings and investment capacity kept them out of economic activities.

318. Lack of data disaggregated by sex prevented some countries from undertaking gender-sensitive assessments of the economy and the impact of economic policies on gender equality, particularly in macroeconomic issues, employment and unemployment. For example, Namibia reported that lack of sex-disaggregated data made it difficult to assess the impact of globalization on women and girls.

319. Several Governments mentioned lack of awareness of gender perspectives and the particular needs of women in the economic sphere. The focus was often on women's vulnerability rather than their potential contribution. This gave gender equality lower priority in budget decisions and in programme development and implementation. The Central African Republic reported that little account was taken of women's specific needs and concerns in the formulation of the national budget. Lack of resources to promote women's economic rights and gender equality, as well as of gender specialists in this area, were also identified as obstacles.

4. Conclusions

320. **Countries have made important progress in promoting women's economic rights and independence. A wide range of gender-sensitive policies and programmes targeting both women and men has increased women's participation in paid and self-employment in most countries. Progress has been uneven, however. While most countries are taking steps to ensure women's equal access to employment and to support women entrepreneurs, less attention is paid to women's participation in economic policy and decision-making. Gender stereotypes still prevent women from reaching senior positions in the private sector and government. Specific measures are needed to ensure that women have access to credit, including microcredit, and to support their participation in both formal and informal sectors.**

321. **Countries have increasingly encouraged men to support women by sharing the unpaid work in the family. Increased exchange of good practice and lessons learned in reconciling work and family life should be encouraged.**

322. **Further attention needs to be given to assessing the impact of economic policies and programmes on women; raising awareness of women's contribution to economic development; increasing their participation in economic decision-making; improving gender equality and attention to gender perspectives in decision-making in the private sector; and increasing the potential for monitoring progress in relation to women and the economy, including through improved statistics and indicators.**

G. Women in power and decision-making

1. Introduction

323. The Platform for Action grouped recommendations under two strategic objectives: first, to ensure that women have equal access to structures of power through establishing an affirmative action policy, promoting and protecting women's political rights, recognizing the importance of shared work and parental responsibilities between men and women; and second, to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making by providing leadership and self-esteem training for women, developing transparent criteria for decision-making positions to ensure a gender-balanced composition in selecting bodies, and raising gender awareness.

324. At its forty-first session in 1997, the Commission on the Status of Women noted that achieving the goals of equal participation of women and men in decision-making would provide a balance that is needed to strengthen democracy.[64]

325. At its twenty-third special session, the General Assembly emphasized the need to introduce quotas and measurable goals to increase the participation of women in political decision-making. It also urged further efforts to encourage political parties to nominate more women for election to legislative bodies.

326. In 2003, the General Assembly urged States to eliminate laws, regulations and practices that, in a discriminatory manner, prevent or restrict women from participating in the political process and to promote the goal of gender balance in all public positions. It appealed to all stakeholders to develop mechanisms and training programmes to encourage women to participate in the electoral processes and to encourage political parties to remove barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against their participation.[65]

2. Achievements

327. Almost all Governments reported measures in this critical area of concern. Most countries reported some increase in women's participation at various levels of decision-making and in different power structures; but the most obvious trend is a continuing lack of equitable participation. Analysis of responses revealed very slow and uneven progress. For example, in Lithuania, a decrease of women's participation in Parliament was accompanied by an increase of women's participation in local government. In Germany, the proportion of women in Parliament has been rising continuously over the past two years, but the proportion of women in the Federal Government has remained the same. Brazil noted an

increase of women in both Parliament and Government. The Dominican Republic reported on the increased representation of women in the Supreme Court.

328. Although many countries provided some information regarding women's participation, differences in reporting made it difficult to identify global trends. Spain reported that after the 2004 elections, women constituted 50 per cent in the executive branch of Government. Ethiopia reported having one female minister in 2004. Armenia provided data for 1999, when only one woman was a minister.

329. As of 25 October 2004, there were nine women Heads of State and Government: six women Presidents (Finland, Indonesia, Ireland, Latvia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka), and three women Prime Ministers (Bangladesh, Mozambique and New Zealand). In 1999, there were 10 women Heads of State and Government (of the following countries and territories: Bangladesh, Bermuda, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands Antilles, New Zealand, Panama, Sri Lanka[66] and Switzerland).

330. According to the data provided by Inter-Parliamentary Union in September 2004, women constitute 15.5 per cent in both houses of parliament worldwide, which is an increase from 12.7 per cent in 1999. The Nordic countries continue to lead in this area with 39.7 per cent women representation in 2004, an increase from 38.9 per cent in 1999. Arab countries have the lowest proportion of women representation in 2004, 6.4 per cent. This figure has, however, almost doubled from 1999 when women constituted only 3.4 per cent of parliamentarians in Arab countries.

331. Two countries, Rwanda and Sweden, are close to the 50-50 goal of representation in Parliament, with 48.8 per cent and 45.3 per cent of women, respectively. Only 11 responding countries (Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands and Norway) had reached the 30 per cent threshold, the established "critical mass" required for women to be able to have a significant impact on the work of parliament.

332. Increasing the representation of women in parliaments is only one aspect of equal participation. Another is ensuring that women members of parliaments have an impact on policy decisions. Women are often found at the bottom of legislative hierarchies or assigned to "soft" areas, including family, welfare and culture. According to data provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, women account for only 6.2 per cent of presiding officers in unicameral parliaments and 10.3 per cent in bicameral parliaments. Only a few countries provided information on women's status in parliament. For example, in 2002, a woman was elected as a president of a parliamentary group in Morocco. In Egypt, a woman holds the position of Deputy Speaker for the People's Assembly.

333. The overwhelming majority of countries noted a general trend towards women's increased participation at the local levels in both urban and rural areas. For example, local elections in Jordan in 2003 resulted in the appointment of 94 women to village councils. In India, more than a million women are now at different levels of local government. In Iceland, the proportion of women in local government increased from 28.2 per cent in 1998 to 31.2 per cent in 2002. In Seychelles, in 2002, women made up 58 per cent of the district administrators. Ethiopia reported a 10 per cent increase of women in local government from 1995 to 2004. In China, the number of women leaders of provincial government departments increased by 12 per cent between 2000 and 2002.

334. In some countries there was an increase of women's participation in judiciary bodies. For example, women are the majority of the Supreme Court justices in Honduras and Nicaragua. Egypt, appointed its first woman judge in 2003 and three more shortly afterwards. In Djibouti, eight of the country's 24 judges are women. In 2001, Chile appointed women to the Supreme Court for the first time: a judge and a prosecutor. In 2002, for the first time, Slovenia had an equal number of men and women on the Constitutional Court, with a woman as president. In Spain, women's participation in the judiciary increased from 31.02 per cent in 1996 to 41.89 per cent in 2004.

335. The strong correlation between electoral systems and the number of women in national parliaments was acknowledged by many countries. For example, Mexico noted the positive impact of the proportional electoral system on women's representation, while Chile and Honduras identified their majoritarian system as an obstacle to women's political participation. Egypt also indicated the need for the revision of the existing electoral system to increase women's opportunities.

336. In notable examples of good practice in increasing women's participation in political parties, Ireland and the Republic of Korea provided public funding for political parties to promote women's participation and Italy obliged parties to allocate funds to increasing women's participation in politics. Three political parties in Cyprus introduced quotas for women; Denmark's minister for gender equality launched a campaign targeting women and political parties; El Salvador's political parties established a programme for leadership training of women; and Tunisia's ruling political party established a secretariat for women's affairs and elected two women in its political bureau.

337. Almost half of all countries reported on quotas or affirmative action measures and their positive impact on women's participation in decision-making. Many countries adopted different types of measures as an effective way to address gender imbalance. Temporary special measures, as called for in article 4.1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, are necessary to accelerate de facto equality, redress past discrimination against women and give them equal opportunities with men for decision-making, jobs and education. The most common forms of quota system are those introduced through constitutional or national legislation, and those that are adopted voluntarily by political parties. For example, France introduced a constitutional amendment requiring political parties to include 50 per cent representation of women on their party lists for election; India reserved 33 per cent of local government seats for women; and Mozambique's Frelimo Party introduced a 30 per cent quota on electoral lists.

338. The United Republic of Tanzania amended its constitution to increase the number of seats for women from 15 to 20 per cent in Parliament, and from 25 to 33 per cent in local governments. Namibia increased the proportion of women in local councils to 42 per cent by affirmative action and noted that in regional councils and the national assembly, where affirmative action was not applied, the number of women remained very low. The Dominican Republic, increased the established affirmative action quota for women for all congressional and municipal appointments from 25 to 33 per cent. Greece ensured 30 per cent of seats were reserved for women in official councils, increasing women's representation in these councils by 40 to 60 per cent; and Morocco adopted 30 reserved seats for women in

the legislative election in 2002, with an increase of female candidates from 0.5 per cent to 10.8 per cent.

339. Many countries, including Colombia, and Zimbabwe, supported some form of "electoral engineering" to increase women's participation in power and decision-making. In Thailand, the implementation of a rural development project, the "Village and community fund", demonstrated the positive impact of the introduction of quotas for women. The Philippines advocated affirmative action in the judiciary, police and military.

340. However, the introduction of quotas and affirmative action raised serious concerns in a number of countries, including Belize, Cyprus, Egypt, Germany, Lithuania and Slovakia. The strategies are sometimes perceived as preferential treatment, contradicting the principle of equal opportunity, and thus as dealing with the consequences as opposed to the root causes of gender inequality. In addition, women in general do not want to be considered "token representatives", elected by preferential treatment.

341. Some countries felt that these strategies should be accompanied by other measures to eliminate gender differences in society, as well as by campaigns to raise awareness and explain the necessity and temporary nature of such measures. For example, studies by the Government of Chile provided a wide range of arguments in favour of quotas and emphasized the need for public information to clarify the issue. Other countries, for example Honduras, emphasized the need for education and training in addition to quotas to prepare women for political leadership.

342. A number of countries reported on legislative reforms to eliminate discriminatory provisions against women. In 2000, Argentina further strengthened legislation by requiring at least 30 per cent female membership in both Houses of the National Congress and establishing a female quota in the Supreme Court, so that the Court "may not draw more than 70 per cent of its membership from the same sex". Belgium amended its constitution to guarantee the right of men and women to equality and imposed gender parity in electoral lists. Federal law in the Russian Federation provides for the participation of women and men in politics on the basis of equal rights. Bahrain's 2002 Constitution guarantees women's right to political participation.

343. Among institutional developments to promote increased political participation of women, Iceland appointed a committee to increase women's participation in decision-making. Nepal established a Reservation Committee to propose ways to achieve 25 per cent representation of women in all sectors and at all levels. Colombia established women's community councils. In Argentina, female legislators set up a cross-party mechanism to ensure priority for decisions on gender equality and empowerment of women and Croatia set up an ad hoc coalition for the increase in the number of women in the parliamentary elections under the slogan "Fifty-one per cent". Egypt's National Council for Women established a centre to increase women's participation in political life and create awareness about the importance of their contribution. Panama set up a monitoring system to ensure 50 per cent women in all decision-making and public-policy negotiation bodies.

344. Most countries reported plans of action, programmes and projects to improve women's participation at different levels of decision-making. Some countries, China for example, developed specific programmes for rural women. Switzerland began

work with media to improve the public perception of women leaders. Denmark introduced an allowance for all members of local government to offset babysitting expenses and the United States reported the development and implementation of international assistance programmes for training women leaders from other countries. South Africa organized childcare facilities for all members of parliament. Zambia established special programmes at university to encourage women's participation in political life.

345. Many countries emphasized the importance of leadership and self-esteem training for women. Malaysia conducted special leadership training programmes for women in collaboration with NGOs and Botswana organized training through an inter-party caucus of women politicians. Armenia conducted leadership training for rural women. Other training programmes are targeted to women already in power, for example in Barbados and Switzerland, or to potential women candidates, as in Egypt, Liechtenstein, Norway and Peru.

346. Public-awareness campaigns proved very effective in many countries. Cyprus, for example, organized a successful public campaign to support women candidates during the elections. In Malawi, a similar campaign during the 2004 elections contributed to the increase of women's representation in the Cabinet. Egypt organized political forums throughout the country and Malta successfully mobilized the local media to promote women's participation in the local council elections.

347. Many countries, including Belgium, Belize, Chile, Liechtenstein, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan and Oman, noted the importance of special studies on the role of women in decision-making and organized workshops and conferences to share lessons learned and good practices. In Azerbaijan, a database of women in leadership positions was established; in the Maldives a directory on women in leadership positions in government was published; Chile organized seminars for politicians on the importance of a quota system for women; and Armenia organized a meeting on women, gender and local self-governance.

3. Obstacles and challenges

348. The responses from Governments revealed many challenges in relation to women and decision-making. Many countries mentioned that cultural patterns, which assign different responsibilities to women and men in the public and private spheres, can restrict women's participation. These cultural patterns derive from a widely accepted traditional understanding of the roles of women and men in society, an understanding, which some countries, such as Algeria, Botswana, and Lithuania, pointed out was accepted by women as well as men. Women also bear most of the burden of family responsibilities, which further impedes their equal participation in decision-making.

349. Some countries noted that women's lack of equal access to education, training and productive resources prevents them from equal participation in power and decision-making. Lower levels of education in general and lack of specific political education, including leadership training, impede women's political participation. Many countries also acknowledged that the media very often supported and maintained patriarchal stereotypes of men's and women's roles in society.

350. Barbados, Chile, Honduras, Lesotho, Mexico and Palestine specifically noted that women's access to representative bodies is affected by the type of electoral system and the selection process of candidates within political parties.

4. Conclusions

351. Despite widespread movement towards democratization since 1995, progress in women's equal participation in power and decision-making continues to be very slow and uneven. Customs, traditions and stereotypes, embedded in daily routines or codified in laws, remain the most common and persistent barriers to women's broader participation in power and decision-making and need to be explicitly addressed. Although equality between men and women exists de jure in most countries, in many it has still not materialized de facto. Women are not present in equal numbers with men at any level. During the last decade, a relatively consistent increase of women's participation has been observed only at local levels of decision-making. Decentralization, with its devolution of power and resources, appears to be opening more opportunities for meaningful participation of women. Women's entry into local politics often challenges stereotypes about their ability to exercise power, and women moving into new areas of power and decision-making need support.

352. The linkages between economic participation and political representation need further study. Removing barriers to equal access to employment and productive resources is critical for creating an enabling environment for economic and political empowerment of women.

353. A lot of attention has been given to increasing women's entry into political decision-making positions. Much less attention has been given to whether women remain in formal political institutions and are able to perform effectively and bring about needed change. Study of the impact of women's participation in terms of transforming institutions, processes and outcomes should be given priority.

354. The focus on women's participation should go beyond numbers to encompass the relationship between the achievement of goals of gender equality and the goals of sustainable development. The continuing marginalization of women in decision-making has been both a cause and an effect of slow progress in many areas of development. The impact of the exclusion of women needs further study.

I. Human rights of women

1. Introduction

355. The Platform for Action, under the critical area of concern "human rights of women", identified three strategic objectives: to promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; to ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice; and to achieve legal literacy. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session (General Assembly resolution S-23/3) reaffirmed that the full realization of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women was essential to their

empowerment, repeating the call for universal ratification of the Convention by 2000 and urging ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Governments were invited to create and maintain a non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive legal framework through the review of legislation, with a view to removing all discriminatory provisions, preferably by 2005, and to eliminate the legislative gaps that leave women and girls, in particular the unprotected and those with special needs, without effective recourse against all forms of discrimination.

2. Achievements

International level

356. The regional normative framework for the protection and promotion of the human rights of women was strengthened with the adoption, by the African Union in July 2003, of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The Protocol has so far been ratified by Comoros, Djibouti, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Rwanda. At the international level, the entry into force of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families on 1 July 2003 also enhanced protection of the rights of migrant women.

357. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women remained the central international human rights instrument for the realization of equality between women and men. As of November 2004, 179 States were party to the Convention. While this is an increase of 35 ratifications, 14 with reservations, since the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, 12 Member States have not yet ratified it, 19 States parties have withdrawn, or partially withdrawn, reservations to the Convention and 58 States parties retain declarations or reservations to one or more provisions. The amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the Committee's meeting time has been accepted by 45 States parties.

358. The Optional Protocol to the Convention, adopted by the General Assembly on 6 October 1999, was opened for signature, ratification and accession on 10 December 1999. The Optional Protocol provides for an individual petitions procedure as well as for an inquiry procedure, and entered into force on 22 December 2000. As of November 2004, 69 States parties to the Convention had become party to the Optional Protocol. Two of those States declared upon ratification not to accept the inquiry procedure.

359. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held 19 sessions, during which it reviewed 190 reports from 122 States parties, many of which were combined reports. As of November 2004, the reports of 50 States parties await consideration. At the same time, the initial reports of 35 States parties were overdue, some by more than 20 years, as were many periodic reports.

360. The Committee elaborated three general recommendations on particular issues or articles of the Convention, in accordance with its article 21, namely No. 23 (1997) on political and public life, No. 24 (1999) on article 12, women and health, and No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, temporary special measures (2004). It also contributed to several world conferences and prepared a statement on reservations to

the Convention on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998.

361. At its twenty-fourth session in January 2001, the Committee began its work under the Optional Protocol, adopting rules of procedure, establishing a working group to prepare the Committee's decisions in regard to the communications procedure and elaborating a model communications form. As of its thirty-first session in July 2004, one complaint had been declared inadmissible and three further cases remained under consideration. The Committee also completed its first inquiry under article 8 of the Optional Protocol.

362. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Committee, with the financial support of Governments, has also held three informal meetings, in Germany in 2000, in Sweden in 2002 and in the Netherlands in 2004. These meetings allowed the Committee to discuss, improve and streamline aspects of its working methods, including revision of its reporting guidelines and rules of procedure.

363. Treaty bodies established under other international human rights treaties continued to pay attention, within their mandates, to the human rights of women and gender perspectives. The Human Rights Committee adopted general comment No. 28 (2000) on the equality of rights between men and women (article 3) and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination adopted general comment XXV (2000) on gender-related dimensions of racial discrimination. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights included attention to women's enjoyment of rights protected under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in a number of its general comments, including No. 12 (1999) on the right to adequate food, No. 13 (1999) on the right to education and No. 14 (2000) on the right to the highest attainable standard of health. The Committee on the Rights of the Child addressed the situation of the girl child in its general comment No. 1 (2001) on education, No. 3 (2003) on HIV/AIDS and No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health.

364. Intergovernmental bodies contributed to strengthening the global policy framework for achieving gender equality. The Commission on Human Rights continued to address the human rights of women under a specific agenda item and also referred to aspects of the human rights of women under a number of other items. The Commission called for attention to gender perspectives and human rights of women in many of its thematic and country resolutions. The Commission encouraged its special rapporteurs and working groups to initiate or continue to mainstream a gender perspective within their mandates.

365. The Commission on the Status of Women, in the framework of its multi-year programme of work, considered the human rights of women at its forty-second session in 1998, when it adopted agreed conclusions on the theme. The Commission also continued its collaboration with the Commission on Human Rights, through the consideration of the annual joint work plan between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women has addressed the Commission on Human Rights annually since 1998, while the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights has addressed the Commission on the Status of Women annually since 2003.

National level

366. The responses of Member States indicated a significant level of attention to the human rights of women. Well over half of the responses addressed this critical area of concern directly, and many others provided information on the human rights of women under other sections of the Platform for Action: constitutional and legislative reforms; national plans of action, policies and strategies; institutional mechanisms; and collaboration with NGOs. Responses confirmed that many Governments increasingly positioned their efforts to achieve the strategic objectives of the Platform for Action within a framework of human rights, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This was evident in sectoral areas such as participation in public life and decision-making, the economy, health and education.

367. In many countries, implementation of the Convention and the realization of gender equality were priorities of public policy; adherence to the Convention was the reason for adopting or revising constitutional and legislative non-discrimination and equality provisions. For example, the definition of discrimination on the basis of gender in Croatia's Gender Equality Act of 2003 was in line with the provisions of the Convention. National plans of action in a number of countries, including the Central African Republic, Madagascar and the Philippines, addressed the rights of women and girls within the framework of the Convention. The Convention also guided constitutional interpretation as in Ethiopia and Iceland, and courts in several jurisdictions, including in Nepal and Poland, invoked the Convention in their decisions.

368. Ten countries noted that the reporting process under the Convention, especially the concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, were widely publicized and formed the basis for further governmental action, including the formulation of legislation and public policy. Germany presented its most recent report to the Bundestag (Parliament), and Poland's Council of Ministers recently adopted that country's combined fourth, fifth and sixth report. A number of Governments disseminated the Committee's concluding comments on web sites, in magazines and through information sessions, workshops and awareness-raising campaigns. In Slovenia, the Committee's concluding comments led to a Government decision to maintain the administrative position, mandate and power of the office for equal opportunities for women.

369. A range of institutional mechanisms had responsibility for reporting and monitoring implementation of the Convention and the Committee's concluding comments. In Lithuania, for example, the inter-ministerial commission for equal opportunities for women and men was responsible for implementing the Committee's concluding comments.

370. Governments collaborated with NGOs and civil society organizations in preparing reports in accordance with article 18 of the Convention; the implementation of training activities for and the monitoring and implementation of the Convention. In Maldives, a workshop resulted in the preparation of a multisectoral action plan, while the Netherlands conducted in-depth studies to improve implementation.

371. Education, public information and outreach activities increased knowledge about the Convention through translation into local languages, the preparation of

simplified versions and the dissemination of brochures. Cuba distributed an annotated version of the Convention to women and family counselling centres, women's affairs departments at universities and among more than 74,000 grass-roots organizations.

372. Following the adoption of the Platform, a number of countries added to their constitutions or human rights acts either the explicit guarantee of equality between women and men or the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex. Several countries, including Belgium, Colombia, Croatia, Greece and Luxembourg, reinforced the equality guarantee with constitutional or legislative obligations to use measures to ensure equality. Greece amended its constitution in 2001, obliging the State to take special positive measures to eliminate discrimination, in particular against women. Colombia and Ecuador added constitutional provisions to protect women against violence.

373. At least 23 countries enacted comprehensive gender equality or equal opportunities acts for women. Other countries strengthened constitutional and legislative provisions on women's equal participation with men in political life and decision-making processes, including requirements for affirmative action and other temporary special measures. Electoral laws sought to eliminate barriers to women's involvement in political life and a number of countries established quotas to increase the number of women in elected office at different levels.

374. Many countries adopted or revised labour codes, employment equality acts or similar legislation regarding equal opportunities between women and men in employment, prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex in employment and affirmative action to balance inequality in employment. Countries also enhanced women's equal access to professions and increased protection against sexual harassment in the workplace and discrimination related to pregnancy. Governments increased maternity leave for women or created parental leave opportunities for either or both parents. Japan supported the balancing of work and child/nursing care by restricting the permissible amount of overtime for employees involved in such care. While Botswana no longer prohibited women from working at night or underground, a number of countries continued protective measures for women in this regard, as well as in regard to restricting pregnant women and women with young children from working under hazardous conditions.

375. At least 35 countries amended civil and family codes and personal status laws. Changes included the revision or repeal of discriminatory provisions relating to the minimum age of marriage for women and men; equality between spouses; the request and granting of separation and divorce; the payment of alimony; filiation; shared custody of children and the division of property upon dissolution of marriage. The family law acts of Barbados, Belize and Costa Rica gave equal rights to women within common-law unions in regard to assets, inheritance and property rights. Morocco's family code of 2004 enshrined the principle of equality of rights and responsibilities of women and men and with regard to the family. The code set 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for men and women; eliminated the system of guardianship over the wife; placed divorce by mutual consent under the control of a judge; and imposed strict legal conditions on polygamy. Legislation enabling same-sex marriages was enacted in the Netherlands in 2001 and in Croatia in 2003, conferring the right to civil marriage for same-sex couples. Several African countries enhanced women's equal rights to use, own or inherit land or communal

property. The Congo enhanced women's right to enter into contracts and to institute legal proceedings.

376. Countries adopted specific non-discrimination or equality provisions in regard to women's housing, education, health care, disability and social security benefits. A number of countries affirmed women's right to sexual and reproductive health (Benin, Brazil, Ecuador and Uganda). Several countries either decriminalized abortion or permitted it under limited circumstances, such as on medical grounds or in cases of incest, rape or HIV/AIDS infection.

377. Countries affirmed women's equality in regard to citizenship and nationality, as well as their equal right to confer their nationality on their children. In Jordan, women can now request and carry a passport without prior permission from a male relative.

378. Many countries amended their penal codes and criminal procedure codes to eliminate provisions that discriminated against women, or to enhance protection for women. Many of these improvements covered forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual assault, rape, including sexual coercion within marriage and partnerships, incest and harmful traditional practices.

379. Several countries responded to the particular needs of refugee women, adopting family reunification procedures (Austria) and applying international guidelines on gender-based persecution in the review of asylum claims (Canada and Norway). Women in prison or detention benefited from additional legal protection when pregnant or caring for young children (Nicaragua) or from rehabilitation services after exposure to violence (Norway). Canada reviewed the legal rights of foreign domestic workers. Indigenous and older women in many countries benefited from laws and programmes responding to their needs.

380. Legal review and reform in many countries eliminated discriminatory laws or initiated new legislation. The Law Reform Commission of Lesotho reviews laws that are discriminatory or outdated, and to speed up justice delivery and administration. One outcome of its work was the Married Persons Equality Bill of 2000.

381. National action plans were important frameworks for legislation, public policy and other strategic initiatives designed to promote, protect and realize the human rights of women. In many countries national action plans or policies were monitored through reports to parliamentary bodies or government departments.

382. A number of countries enhanced the role of courts and the judiciary in the protection of women's rights. A number of countries had family courts (China, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco and Turkey) and others were setting them up (Chile, Cyprus and Malaysia). Several Governments reported an increase in the number of women holding positions in the judiciary, including in the highest courts.

383. Among practical measures to improve women's access to justice, Governments established or funded legal aid clinics and legal service agencies catering to women. Following a recommendation by a women's forum in 2000, Burkina Faso created the national legal aid commission to give disadvantaged persons, many of whom are women, access to courts without cost.

384. Capacity-building and information activities, often directed at public officials, included training activities, workshops, video presentations and information and

reference materials. Governments often supported or partnered with national and international NGOs. For instance El Salvador's Institute for the Advancement of Women developed and implemented a training programme on human rights and women's rights for government officials and NGOs throughout the country. The national commission on the role of Filipino women and the University of the Philippines integrated women's human rights into training modules for the police and the military, teachers and supervisors, jail wardens and employees and prisoners.

385. For at least 11 countries, women's human rights and gender equality were important components of foreign policy and development cooperation.

386. To increase women's legal literacy and understanding of their rights as well as general awareness of women's rights, Governments and NGOs organized national or local activities such as capacity-building and training initiatives, workshops, seminars and conferences. They produced and disseminated print and audio materials of relevant legislation, the Convention and the Platform for Action, often in local languages. Guinea produced and distributed two editions of a guide to women's rights and a compilation of national legislation on the subject. In many instances, general human rights and legal literacy campaigns also covered women's human rights, using the press, television, radio and information leaflets. Member States also integrated human rights education into school and university curricula and established human rights resource centres.

387. Governments increasingly used ICT to disseminate information related to women's rights and laws. For instance, Singapore set up a one-stop Internet portal with links to frequently sought legal information and law-related agencies.

388. A number of replies suggested that NGOs helped increase public awareness of women's human rights and gender equality. Men and boys took part in the efforts of some countries to tackle the root causes of discrimination against women. Malawi's campaign culminated in a "Men for Gender Equality" network.

389. Among the wide variety of institutions and mechanisms with responsibility for women's human rights, some specifically uphold women's rights while others promote gender equality in general. Such mechanisms are found at various levels within and outside Government with participation by governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. Costa Rica established a national network of municipal women's offices to promote gender equality at the local level. The Republic of Korea's special task force of representatives from ministries, academia and NGOs prepared a bill abolishing the "head of family" system.

390. In some countries, the mandates of national human rights institutions or commissions included a focus on women's human rights. The human rights and equal opportunity commission of Australia includes a sex discrimination commissioner. In other countries the ombudsman is mandated to deal with discrimination complaints and equality issues, sometimes in regard specifically to sex-based discrimination. In Gambia, the office of the ombudsman raised women's awareness of their rights and provided redress for injustices in the workplace. The national observatory on women's human rights and parity in Gabon, a non-governmental entity, carried out studies and advised on new initiatives on gender equality.

391. Parliamentary committees on human rights or on gender equality in a number of countries supported passage of specific gender equality legislation and monitored the application of gender equality principles in all legislation as in Australia, Bolivia, India and Ireland. In Israel, the Knesset (Parliament) committee on the status of women has played a crucial role within Parliament and beyond by building networks and alliances for gender equality and social change.

3. Obstacles and challenges

392. Many Governments indicated that legal discrimination against women persisted, and that some laws were discriminatory in effect. A review in Nepal identified 137 discriminatory laws. The Philippines noted the lack of a provision on discrimination in its legislation in accordance with article 1 of the Convention.

393. While some Governments acknowledged that the Convention had had no significant impact at national level, others recognized that reservations to the Convention constituted an obstacle to the realization of women's rights. Failure to reflect the Convention in domestic law also remained a cause of concern.

394. Several replies indicated that, while constitutions provided for equality between women and men on the one hand, they recognized and gave precedent to customary law and practice in a number of areas on the other, resulting in discrimination against women (Gambia, Lesotho and Zimbabwe). Several countries noted that statutory, customary and religious law coexist, especially in regard to family, personal status and inheritance and land rights. This perpetuated discrimination against women.

395. The penal codes of a number of countries continued to contain discriminatory provisions, especially in relation to marriage and the family and violence against women, including sexual violence. In Lebanon, the code made a distinction concerning honour crimes: a man who had perpetrated murder or injury on a female relative caught in suspicious circumstances received a lighter penalty. Countries also mentioned as remaining challenges the lack, inadequacy or failure to enforce legislation in other areas, including civil, family, labour and commercial law. Although Niger had drawn up a family code in 1975, religious groups still prevented its adoption.

396. Even with adequate legislation, a number of factors hindered enforcement. In several countries, the judiciary was biased against women or failed to take the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into account. In Brazil, gender stereotyping in judicial decisions was most prevalent in cases of domestic and sexual violence. Ending structural discrimination and establishing equal opportunities for women and men de facto also remained a challenge (Austria). Gaps between women's de jure and de facto equality persisted (Azerbaijan and Mali), and gender analysis of all legislation was not systematically conducted (Azerbaijan).

397. In many countries government officials, women themselves and the general public remained unaware of the rights of women. Inadequate protection for the rights of women was the result of law officers' and public officials' ignorance of the Convention and gender equality. Discrimination against women in practice was the result of persistent social and cultural attitudes emphasizing traditional roles and stereotypes of women and the subordinate position of women in society and the

family. Public resistance to women's human rights and lack of political will were also obstacles. Other barriers included women's lack of awareness of their rights, coupled with fear or distrust of mechanisms of redress; delays in the administration of justice for women; and the disproportionate impact of poverty on women.

398. The compounding effect of multiple factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, ability, age, sexual orientation and violence perpetuated discrimination against women and hindered their equal access to education, employment, health care and justice. Limited financial, human and technical resources were further constraints on realization of equality. Lack of sex-disaggregated data and research related to women was a shortcoming for the development and evaluation of appropriate legislation, policy and programmes of action.

399. Several Governments noted that national action plans, policies and programmes did not reflect the aims of the Convention or the Platform for Action nor did they provide appropriate implementation or monitoring mechanisms.

4. Conclusions

400. Many Governments have placed priority on the realization of the human rights of women. This is evident in the improved constitutional and legislative provisions for securing women's de jure equality and compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. New laws have helped to create a more gender-sensitive legal framework and have eliminated gaps in the protection of women's human rights. Implementation and monitoring mechanisms have been enhanced. Women's legal literacy and knowledge of their rights have been improved, as has their access to justice, including through international means of redress. The general public, civil society and government officials have been made aware of women's human rights through training, education and outreach. Many of these activities were implemented in partnerships among Governments, national and international NGOs and women's groups.

401. At the same time, facially discriminatory provisions exist in many countries, in the areas of personal status and penal, labour and commercial law; laws governing marriage and family relations; and nationality law. The coexistence of multiple legal systems also works to the disadvantage of women. Women often do not know their rights and cannot enjoy them in practice. Social and cultural patterns of behaviour also limit women's access to their rights and perpetuate stereotypical views of women, placing them in positions of inferiority compared to men. Redress is not always available, or may be ineffective because of the judiciary's lack of gender sensitivity, or it may be inaccessible to women for financial or other reasons.

402. Countries should review constitutional and legislative provisions without delay and correct all aspects discriminatory to women in effect or purpose. Reform of constitutions and bills of rights especially is necessary to ensure full compliance with the Convention. National law should enshrine equality between women and men and prohibit discrimination in line with article 1 of the Convention. It should also provide for temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, to accelerate de facto equality between women and men. Effective, affordable and accessible

means of recourse and redress for violations of women's rights must be available, including gender-sensitive courts and tribunals.

403. **Urgent efforts are needed to achieve universal ratification of the Convention, increase the number of States parties to the Optional Protocol and to other international and regional human rights treaties on the rights of women. States that have entered reservations should continue their review with a view to withdrawing them.**

404. **Effective functioning of the legal framework calls for complementary plans of action and policies on the rights of women and the establishment of measurable indicators to determine progress. Countries should also set up and strengthen institutional mechanisms to: monitor implementation of the Convention, strategic objectives of the Platform for Action and national plans of action and policies; deal with discrimination complaints; and undertake legal reform.**

405. **States should ensure comprehensive human rights education in curricula at all levels and should also tackle traditional and cultural stereotypes with awareness-raising and public information programmes. Education and information should reach all levels of society, especially public officials, the judiciary and educators, in order to enhance their support for gender equality and a non-discriminatory environment. Education and information should empower women with knowledge of their rights and their capacity to claim them.**

406. **Comprehensive and collaborative efforts among government officials, national and international NGOs and women's associations should be enhanced. More extensive use should be made of the media and new ICT, to reach women in all walks of life, in particular those who face multiple forms of discrimination. Men and boys have a critical role in creating a non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive environment. They should be actively involved in initiatives for the realization of women's human rights.**

J. Women and the media

1. Introduction

407. The Platform for Action outlined two strategic objectives under the critical area of concern on women and media. The first called for increased participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media; the second for a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media. Both objectives outlined actions to be taken by Governments, policy-making bodies, the media and NGOs.

408. In the outcome of the twenty-third special session, the General Assembly noted that the establishment of local, national and international women's media networks had supported women's involvement in media work. In addition, the development of ICT had enabled an increasing number of women to contribute to knowledge-sharing, networking and electronic commerce activities. However, obstacles identified included continued negative stereotypes and portrayals of women in the media; the impact of poverty and illiteracy; lack of computer literacy; and language barriers.

2. Achievements

409. Seventy-six countries provided information on women and media. Guidelines on gender equality and media, including on media content and women's participation, are now an integral part of national action plans on gender equality in several countries. In the Dominican Republic, an action platform included education, culture and communications media as one of its four main areas. Poland's national action plan promoted gender equality and the non-stereotypical presentation of women in the media. The United Republic of Tanzania set up a national policy on ICT to improve reporting on gender issues from the grass-roots levels.

410. Governments reported on policies and legislation to promote gender equality and empowerment in the media. China regulated against content that is degrading to women. Venezuela approved legislation that includes fines for promoting or condoning discrimination on several grounds, including gender. Austria regulated that programmes should not provoke hatred, including on grounds of sex, and should respect human dignity and the basic rights of others. A study in Brazil noted 11 mechanisms to fight degrading or violent situations, sexual abuse, racism and other forms of discrimination in the media.

411. Countries have set up national bodies to monitor portrayal of women in the media and establish regulations and guidelines. A regular column in the *China Women's Daily* by the association for women journalists monitors and reports on the media from a gender perspective. In Egypt, the women's committee of the radio and television union is responsible for setting national strategies, plans and programmes to empower women and enhance their status in the media. The national council for women in Egypt also created a media watch unit to monitor the content of media messages relating to women and to recommend corrective measures. The media women's association in the United Republic of Tanzania, along with 10 other professional media associations, created guidelines and voluntary codes of conduct for fair portrayal of women and gender equality issues. Belgium has a mechanism to test the gender neutrality of programmes. It will establish an initial benchmark and then track progress. Chile recently studied the image and profile of women consumers as reflected in network television advertising. Chile awards an annual prize for advertising and electronic journalism agencies in order to recognize products that portray women without stereotypes.

412. In some countries, women are increasingly taking up careers in the media, including positions in decision-making and management. Germany reported that the proportion of women in managerial positions in public broadcasting more than doubled, from 6 per cent in 1985 to 14 per cent in 2004. The United Kingdom has legislated for equality of opportunity for women in the media.

413. In Egypt, the head of national television for over 20 years has been a woman, and seven out of the 10 national television channels have women as their directors or deputy directors. Since 1997, the Islamic Republic of Iran has seen a 53 per cent increase in the number of women managing directors of news publications. Of the 353 women working for the State-run Islamic Republic News Agency, 291 are directly working on the news desk using ICT. The number of women employed in the media is expected to increase in Qatar, with the opening of a media department at the University of Qatar, which provides capacity-building facilities for women. In Algeria, women account for over 50 per cent of personnel in the print media,

including both State-owned and private publications. They also account for 57.67 per cent of all television journalists. Kenya reported that the enrolment of women in the school of journalism/mass communication increased by almost 90 per cent over the last 10 years.

414. Training of media professionals can be considered key to combating gender stereotypes and producing gender-sensitive material and programmes. Seychelles reported that a South African NGO trained media personnel on coverage of gender-based violence. Participants in the workshop created a new association to provide opportunities for gender sensitization of the media. Liberia trained media personnel in gender analysis. In 2003, China set up a column "Media and gender", which will help develop research and practice in this area and sensitize the media to gender issues. Joint action between the Government, trade unions, NGOs and professional associations in Cuba has trained more than 500 gender specialists. Five public service broadcasting organizations in Finland co-produced a training toolkit to provide insight into gender portrayal on television. Indonesia has designed an orientation programme to increase media knowledge on gender issues and encourage gender-sensitive attitudes.

415. At the five-year review and appraisal in 2000, the establishment of women's media organizations and networks was reported as a significant achievement. These networks continue to grow and promote increased participation and promotion of women. Ireland reported the creation of a diversity database of women experts in different fields to add more women's voices to media commentary. A group in Nepal launched a web site for sharing information on women and gender issues. Viet Nam's national committee for the advancement of women managed a resource centre on gender and development. Thailand set up a media network for women composed of media professionals, gender experts, government officials, women's NGOs and other stakeholders. Activities have included gender sensitization of media professionals. An NGO in Namibia publishes a magazine of contributions from women on issues affecting their lives.

416. Media literacy and awareness of the general public about the need to hold media accountable for gender content and imagery are essential to promote change. Bulgaria provided training to secondary school students to increase their awareness of gender-related issues in the media and began a project on gender training and media for law students.

417. In Japan, training courses are broadcast via satellite and web sites to improve media literacy. The Islamic Republic of Iran has planned ICT training for women, especially women who do not work outside the home, with the collaboration of women's NGOs.

418. Research is needed to promote a balanced portrayal in the media of women and girls and their multiple roles, as well as to understand how women use and access the media in their families and communities. Targeted field research on gender and mass media in Greece showed that media stereotypes persist and help to shape social consciousness. Italy set up a number of working groups to analyse, monitor and formulate proposals on discrimination in areas such as health, media, sport and social integration. In 2003, researchers at Vilnius University in Lithuania analysed sexual stereotypes in the Lithuanian media.

419. Countries reported national and regional media campaigns on critical topics affecting women and girls. Malaysia reported a media campaign to eliminate violence against vulnerable family members, including women; Mexico ran a number of communication campaigns against domestic violence and a campaign to recognize domestic work and its contribution to the economy; and public information campaigns in Finland stressed the importance of educating and empowering girls. Other major initiatives included a campaign to combat child abuse in Central America. Azerbaijan participated in a regional information campaign on life without violence and devoted television broadcasts to women's issues.

420. Among media efforts to promote women's political participation, Belgium encouraged party leaders around election time to put more women on their candidate lists and to urge voters to vote for women.

3. Obstacles and challenges

421. The growing number of women working in the communications sector has not translated into increased access for women to power and decision-making in media. The Philippines and Viet Nam reported a low percentage of women in media policy-making roles. Cyprus noted a lack of gender balance throughout decision-making in all social and political structures and processes, including the mass media. Egypt reported that most people working in the media, including women in high managerial posts, were not aware of the gender aspects of development.

422. Turkey reported that women were still seriously underrepresented in the media, which contributed to the persistence of sexism. Kenya and Peru reported a lack of sex-disaggregated data on employees in the different sectors of the media and could not assess the number of women employed in decision-making positions.

423. Lack of gender sensitivity in media policies is an ongoing problem. Gender stereotypes and negative images are common. In Mauritius, the media do not perceive social and gender issues and activities as an essential part of development and old stereotypes prevail. Belgium, Brazil and Cuba reported sexist advertising and imagery in most media, and Brazil also reported that there were no mechanisms to improve the image of women and girls in the media. In the Czech Republic, women are still presented in the media and in advertising in traditional roles.

424. Pornography and sexually exploitative material present another challenge in combating stereotypes and negative images. The Internet is more difficult to monitor than traditional media, but Japan reported measures to monitor and remove illegal and harmful information that commercializes sex over the Internet.

425. There is a need to involve women in the use of new ICT. Liberia reported that ICT were beyond the reach of most women. The Congo also reported lack of access to the Internet and ICT. Women's illiteracy and lack of access to resources constrained their access to new technologies.

4. Conclusions

426. **Without comprehensive educational and training programmes, social and cultural constraints will continue to be an impediment to women's access to media career opportunities and equal participation in the media. Concerted efforts are needed to educate media policy makers on women's rights to equal**

participation and on the need to eliminate discrimination and stereotyping in all aspects of the media.

427. **Exchange of good practice and lessons learned from countries that have used media advertising and programming to improve the image of women and have established regulatory mechanisms on gender portrayal in the media, including media campaigns that have successfully drawn attention to key issues such as violence against women, should be encouraged.**

428. **Enhanced use of traditional media, such as radio and printed matter, is required, particularly in rural areas in many countries. In developing countries, local media outlets are often the only source of news on community issues such as employment, education and local events, and provide opportunity for women and girls to participate.**

K. Women and the environment

1. Introduction

429. The Platform for Action noted the close interrelation between poverty and environmental degradation and the need to eradicate poverty to achieve sustainable development. Governments and other actors were called upon to promote gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes. The outcome of the twenty-third special session and the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development called for women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making at all levels, gender mainstreaming into environmental policies and strategies and awareness-raising for women on environmental concerns.

430. Only three of the major conventions on natural resource issues explicitly addressed the participation of women in environmental decision-making and the need to raise awareness among women on environmental issues: the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2004), the Convention on Biological Diversity (1993) and the Convention to Combat Desertification (1996).

431. Seventy-seven responses dealt with women and the environment, with relatively few countries identifying this area as a priority for action.

2. Achievements

432. Reporting by States parties on implementation of major conventions provide an important mechanism to assess the impact of environmental policies on women. Parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants committed themselves to consulting women's groups on implementation and to promoting public awareness among women.

433. The Convention on Biological Diversity affirmed the need for the full participation of women. According to the second national reports submitted to the secretariat of the Convention, only 25 per cent of States parties fully incorporated women and women's organizations in activities under the Convention.[67]

434. Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification committed themselves to promoting women's awareness, participation and decision-making in this area. Several States parties reported on their efforts, including Ethiopia, which had

developed national gender mainstreaming strategies in accordance with Convention guidelines.

435. Although the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women does not explicitly address the issues of environment, several States parties reported promoting women's participation in environmental decision-making and mainstreaming gender perspectives in sustainable development.

436. In March 2002, 22 women ministers of the environment and 28 women leaders of intergovernmental and non-governmental environmental organizations gathered in Helsinki for the first global opportunity for women environmental leaders to meet to address crucial issues for the future. The meeting produced a statement to the World Summit on Sustainable Development and set up a network of women ministers of the environment to ensure sustained global attention to gender issues in environmental issues. For 2004 to 2005, members identified demography and sanitation, freshwater, energy and sustainable security as priority issues.

437. Following the recommendations contained in the Platform for Action, several countries carried out technical assistance activities for women. Many promoted alternatives to firewood such as solar energy and biogas. Egypt trained women to use biogas in cooking. Similar efforts in Mauritania reduced indoor air pollution and the amount of time women and children spent collecting firewood. China assisted women in remote mountainous areas and other poor areas to build water tanks. Japan created the Global Environment Fund to encourage the establishment of women's networks and international meetings for women on the environment.

438. Many countries recognized women as the vanguard in environmental rehabilitation, the principal conduit of ecological knowledge and customs to the younger generation and the principal promoters of sustainable development. Through their management and use of natural resources in forestry, fishery and agriculture, women provide sustenance to their families and communities. Kenya and Liberia emphasized that since women were the main producers of food they were more seriously affected by adverse environmental conditions. Women's initiatives in Mali to establish an "Environment House" and to involve youth in cleaning their neighbourhoods have had the effect of promoting the nomination of women to local government.

439. Some Governments promoted women's involvement in environmental decision-making, either from a human rights perspective or because they recognized women's important contributions to sustainable development. They promoted women's participation in regard to climate change, biodiversity, ecological tourism, forestry, freshwater, desertification, energy and the recycling of plastic waste. In Bangladesh women addressed problems of high levels of arsenic in drinking water. Colombia facilitated women's active involvement in environmental protection, preservation and biodiversity. With assistance from the European Commission, a German project supported participation of women in climate policy decisions, in particular local decisions. South Africa organized a workshop on nuclear energy in order to mobilize and support the involvement of women in the various fields of nuclear technology and application and radiation protection.

440. Some action plans developed for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action addressed the role of women in environmental policy and decision-making. Croatia's policy involves women in planning, decision-making and

implementing environmental protection and sustainable development programmes, including on environmental pollution and ecological disasters. The Spanish plan promoted the active participation of women in environmental programmes.

441. Action programmes in line ministries in a number of countries addressed women's participation in environmental decision-making. One outcome of Malawi's strategy to implement the Platform for Action was a new hostel for women at the forestry training college. The national action plans of Nepal and the Syrian Arab Republic promoted the participation of women and women's groups, in the case of Nepal in the forestry and soil conservation sector. In Jordan, the Global Environment Facility's small grants programme supported women's associations, community environmental projects and programmes. In view of the exposure of women farmers to persistent organic pollutants, the environmental action plan of the Gambia calls for the sensitization of women on the subject of hazardous chemicals.

442. Some countries reported appointing women to high-level government positions, including: the first minister to be appointed in the Ministry of State for the Environment of Egypt; the Vice-President and head of the Environmental Protection Organization in the Islamic Republic of Iran; the head of the National Institute for Environment and Development in Suriname; and the head of the Environmental Studies Unit of the University of Qatar.

443. A number of States promoted overall awareness about sustainable development and carried out specific training for women, including local awareness-raising projects, field days and media campaigns. For example, Bedouin women in the Syrian Arab Republic were invited to field days focused on environmental balance and range management and rehabilitation. Media campaigns were used by both China, to raise the awareness of women on the importance of saving water, and Spain, to build awareness among women consumers of the impact of products, technology and industries on health and the environment.

444. Training for women and women's organizations ranged from environmental management and conservation to recycling and waste management. Lithuania promoted ecological training programmes in public bodies and women's organizations and Mexico financed five training projects to strengthen the capacity of local women's groups to engage in organic agricultural practices. Women teachers from the University of Malawi and forestry colleges trained women in forest reserve management. The Syrian Arab Republic trained women in environmental resources management in order to enhance their participation in the national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

445. Ethiopia and Mozambique integrated environment education into formal education. Ethiopia included natural resources management in higher education, including vocational training, which increased the participation of female students.

446. Some developing countries promoted women's access to natural resources. Panama designed environmental initiatives to ensure women's access to natural resources for environment-friendly crafts and to provide services promoting preservation and biodiversity. Ethiopia reported that granting women equal rights in respect of the use, administration and control of land had paved the way for better management of natural resources for women in general, and female-headed households in particular, by involving them in decision-making.

447. Some countries, including Panama and Ethiopia, adopted specific gender mainstreaming strategies and action plans in the area of sustainable development. Other countries such as Norway, Paraguay, Slovakia and Sweden incorporated gender perspectives in environmental strategies and action plans. In developing its national environmental policy, Zambia established a gender analysis framework.

448. Countries have also incorporated sustainable development activities in national plans to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. For example, the Ministries of Environment and Women's Empowerment of Indonesia signed a memorandum of understanding, one result of which was a national plan of action on women and environment. The Federation of Cuban Women adopted joint action plans with the Ministry of Agriculture and several other ministries concerned with resource use.

449. Countries incorporated gender perspectives into policies and programmes in a variety of sectors, including: biodiversity; forestry; fisheries; wildlife conservation; desertification and drought; protected areas; sustainable water resources; energy; indoor air pollution; and household waste management. Malawi integrated rural women's traditional knowledge and practices into its environmental management and extension programmes. El Salvador incorporated gender perspectives into sectoral policies on wildlife conservation, desertification and drought, natural protected areas and sustainability of water resources. The Government of Germany launched gender mainstreaming in environmental policies in the spring of 2000. Mexico's programme on gender equality, environment and sustainability resulted in a national gender equality liaison committee, which has influenced the operating rules of five government-subsidized environmental programmes.

450. Several countries developed institutional mechanisms to facilitate gender mainstreaming within ministries of the environment and other line ministries dealing with sustainable development. Some Governments established special offices within ministries to promote gender equality, for example the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Guatemala and Thailand. Others prepared guidelines, manuals and training handbooks on gender mainstreaming in the environment. Indonesia prepared a manual on gender-responsive environmental planning and implementation and Togo appointed a panel of gender and development educators to develop a training handbook. Paraguay prepared guidelines for incorporating gender perspectives in sustainable development projects.

451. Several Governments carried out gender sensitization workshops and training for technical staff in Ministries, NGOs and the public. Kuwait nominated women environmental focal points to work with NGOs in promoting awareness of environmental issues. Palestine organized a training workshop on mainstreaming gender in environmental policies, plans and programmes. The Institute for the Advancement of Women in El Salvador provided training and advice to line ministries on setting up training modules on gender equality. Some countries incorporated gender perspectives into regular training, for example, in training on sustainable tourism in Mexico.

452. Countries have studied the impact of environmental degradation on women and the links between gender equality and sustainable development. Kyrgyzstan is studying radon levels to prevent any harmful ecological impact on reproductive health of women. In collaboration with civil society, Mexico carried out three diagnostic gender studies on protected natural areas. The Republic of Korea commissioned a study on gender perspectives in environmental policies. Malawi

developed a research project on gender and agro-biodiversity to contribute to gender-sensitive methodologies, information and capacities in research.

453. Some countries carried out gender impact assessments in environmental subsectors. For example, a gender impact assessment in Germany clarified gender perspectives in the reform of the Radiation Protection Ordinance. In Canada, as a result of gender analysis, offshore oil development and mining projects are now required to have specific employment plans for women.

454. Women's groups and NGOs in many countries work on sustainable development. Malawi reported that 11 NGOs were working on mainstreaming gender perspectives into natural resources and environment management. Activities included gender sensitization and training, advocacy and advisory services. Some countries reported their support for NGOs and women's groups. Nepal gave an award to three women's NGOs for their special contribution to the protection of environment. Lithuania provided women's organizations with information, knowledge and skills and created an environmental protection network of women's organizations. The Department of Minerals and Energy of South Africa supported a rural women's association in their efforts to ensure sufficient water for their communal gardens.

3. Obstacles and challenges

455. Despite some progress in promoting women's participation in environmental decision-making and incorporating gender perspectives into environmental issues, important challenges remain. A number of countries indicated that the overall challenge is the lack of public awareness of environmental issues. Other countries also emphasized the lack of awareness about the harmful effects of environmental change and degradation on women; the importance of women's participation and decision-making in environmental management and conservation; and the benefits that gender equality could bring to the promotion of environmental protection. Qatar identified the absence of environmental issues from the school curricula as one reason for this lack of awareness.

456. Although some countries recognized women's essential role as users and managers of natural resources, their involvement in decision-making is still limited. Reasons identified by several Member States included women's high illiteracy rates, limited access to natural resources and lack of information and technical training.

457. Other major obstacles noted were lack of political will and commitment; lack of gender specialist resources; lack of research on gender and environment; lack of financial resources for environmental issues in general and gender-sensitive activities in particular; and lack of sex-disaggregated data. Djibouti noted that data disaggregated by sex was lacking in areas such as water, energy and natural resources management. The Congo and Liberia reported that their national machineries for the advancement of women had neither capacity nor funding to provide assistance in the environmental sector.

458. Malawi noted the dependency of most households on firewood. Women walk long distances to collect firewood and the consequent depletion of the forests had led to environmental degradation, with particular health and food security consequences for women.

4. Conclusions

459. **It is clear from the higher percentage of responses addressing women and the environment that progress has been made both in enhancing women's participation in environmental decision-making processes and in promoting gender mainstreaming in the environmental sector.**

460. **An important lesson learned is the need to consider gender perspectives in all aspects of the project cycle: to use data disaggregated by sex in planning; to include both women and men in all activities in management; and to incorporate gender analysis in monitoring and evaluation, for example in environmental impact assessments. It is also important to incorporate gender perspectives into reporting on conventions on natural resource issues. Further progress towards sustainable development could be achieved through closer cooperation between Governments and civil society, in particular women's organizations, and the private sector.**

L. The girl child

1. Introduction

461. The Platform for Action called for comprehensive policy, programmes and legislative measures to: promote the rights of the girl child; eliminate all forms of discrimination and negative cultural attitudes and practices; and increase awareness of her needs and potential. The Platform prohibited discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training and in health and nutrition, advocated the elimination of economic exploitation and child labour and the protection of young girls at work as well as promoting the eradication of violence against the girl child and her awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life.

462. In the outcome of the twenty-third special session, the General Assembly called for further actions to: improve the reproductive and sexual health of adolescents; eliminate sexual abuse and exploitation of the girl child, child pornography and trafficking; and end harmful practices such as prenatal sex selection, sex preference, female infanticide, female genital mutilation/cutting, early marriages and crimes committed in the name of honour.

463. Both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child[68] prescribe a comprehensive set of measures to ensure the elimination of discrimination against the girl child. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography[69] further develops the international human rights mechanisms to protect the girl child from violence and abuse. ILO estimates that at least 8.4 million girls and boys of all ages are involved in the worst forms of child labour.[70]

2. Achievements

464. All responses covered this critical area of concern. Many Member States reported on their efforts to improve the situation of the girl child by fulfilling their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as under three ILO conventions with specific relevance to the protection of the rights of the

girl child, namely the Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (1930); the Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973), which aims at eradicating child labour and, in particular, the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999).

465. Governments reported legislation on behalf of children that incorporate concerns for the girl child. Ecuador introduced a children's code to protect girls and female adolescents. Azerbaijan's new laws on rights of the child and youth policy include the key principle of gender equality and non-discrimination.

466. Countries legislated to improve the reproductive and sexual health of adolescents: for example, Costa Rica adopted a law to protect the rights of teenage mothers. Countries, including Mauritania and Kenya, legislated to eliminate discrimination against the girl child in education.

467. Countries amended labour laws and regulations to combat child labour. China prescribed severe economic penalties for using child labour illegally and guaranteed protection for young girls. In Maldives, the employment of persons under 14 years was made illegal under any circumstances. Mauritania modified the legal age of employment from 14 to 16 years.

468. Member States have made progress in amending laws in three areas. Firstly, to prevent prenatal sex selection and discrimination against girl children and women who bear girls. China has forbidden the use of technologies to determine foetal sex to prevent sex selective abortions, the abandonment of girls and discrimination against girls, women with girl children and infertile women. Nepal and Viet Nam have similar laws. Viet Nam's law prohibited parents discriminating between their children and stipulates that choosing the sex of an unborn child by any means is prohibited. Secondly, States acted to prohibit child and forced marriages. Djibouti established a minimum age of 18 for marriage. Nepal increased the jail penalty for child marriage from six months to three years and fines tenfold. Other countries introduced similar laws, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Maldives and Norway. Thirdly, States strengthened legislation in the areas of inheritance; parental care; maintenance of children; alimony; and custody. For example Liberia legislated to permit women and girl children to inherit property.

469. Countries have adopted laws to protect children, especially girls, from all forms of violence, including sexual abuse and exploitation and to punish child sex offenders. In Japan, laws are in force to: punish acts related to child prostitution and child pornography; proscribe stalking and assist victims; and prevent child abuse. The Netherlands has criminalized sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography; Algeria has proscribed the use of the Internet for such purposes. The Philippines protects children's testimony in child abuse cases. The Central African Republic's family code and Spain's penal code contain provisions against practices harmful to women and girls and protect the rights of the girl child. The Republic of Korea has passed a law to protect minors from harm, including abuse and violence.

470. Governments reported that national action plans incorporate the rights and special needs of the girl child. For example, Ireland's national youth work development plan for 2003-2007 addressed gender equality. Sweden reported a gender review of its youth policy and preparing a plan of action for social services

for children and young people. A national family policy action plan was submitted to the cabinet of Latvia. The fifth country programme for children of the Philippines oversees the integration of gender considerations into the medium-term strategic framework on the girl child. Bulgaria launched a project to stimulate the equality of girls and women through sports. Advancement and protection of the girl child was a priority of Cameroon's national plan of action for the integration of women in development.

471. With regard to institutional mechanisms, Ireland set up a national youth work advisory committee to oversee implementation of the national youth plan. Jordan founded a national council for family affairs in 2002 to address family issues, including the girl child. In Liberia, the women and children coordination unit established gender desk offices in each of the 18 line ministries. Mauritius has appointed an ombudsperson for children. Guinea set up a national committee on the rights of the child and established a network for people working on children's issues, including girl children. Norway's Ministry for Children and Family Affairs is responsible for the welfare of the girl child.

472. Member States have emphasized the importance of the family in enhancing the status of the girl child, especially street children, runaway children and children in situations of risk. Actions to support the family included economic benefits, housing programmes, child support and childcare. Colombia relied on families to reintegrate children, including girl children, who had been involved in armed conflict. France has reviewed housing access and assistance to young homeless women, in response to a 60 per cent increase in four years in the number of young women calling a free hotline for homeless people.

473. Many responses noted the need for more data disaggregated by sex and age and for more research on the girl child. Several countries reported regular collection, production and analysis of sex- and age-disaggregated statistics. The Islamic Republic of Iran reported a study on the reasons girls leave their homes and families. Brazil planned a study on the involvement of families in the exploitation of children, especially girls, by third parties, and on abuse in the home. Mauritania studied children's involvement in commercial sex work. Finland set up a working group to study violence and sexual abuse against children and to develop practical guidance for social workers, health specialists and police. Croatia and Luxembourg conducted research projects on sexuality, sexual behaviour and the attitudes of adolescents. A subregional study of qualitative participation and actual influence exerted by young women in various fields was conducted in Germany, Italy and Austria.

474. Reviews of curricula, textbooks and teaching materials are part of special efforts to eliminate gender stereotypes in teaching. Belgium established a policy to ensure that textbooks and teaching methods are free of stereotypes and contain empowering and intercultural content. Liechtenstein placed special emphasis on eliminating gender segregation in education modules and making needlework, cooking, fishing and carpentry available to both boys and girls. The Netherlands took gender differences into account in the design of science subjects in secondary schools, including both the content and titles of courses.

475. Making schools safe for girls was raised as an important issue by some countries, including Liberia. Studies from several countries including South Africa, Swaziland Sweden and Zimbabwe, indicated high levels of violence, including

sexual violence, against girls at school. In Zimbabwe, for example, one in eight teenage girls said they had had forced intercourse within the previous year.[71]

476. Among media and public outreach initiatives are efforts to improve girls' own perception of themselves and raise public awareness of the rights of the girl child. A radio campaign in Guinea publicized the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Congo organized seminars on human rights of women and girls. A number of States reported campaigns for adolescents to help eliminate violence against the girl child. The Czech Republic's campaign, for example, employed computer games, CD supplements to computer game magazines, advertisements in transport outlets and Internet portals, cinema advertisements and broadcasting in the youth media. In Benin and Chad campaigns against female genital mutilation/cutting targeted girls at risk, between the ages of 8 and 14.

477. A number of Member States reported encouraging girls to take leadership roles. Namibia reported a project to prepare girls through training and networking to take leadership positions in all spheres of society. Denmark has conducted youth workshops and camps on violence against women and girls. Chile has special programmes on adolescents with a view to providing equal opportunities for boys and girls. Belgium has supported projects to empower young immigrant women to express themselves. Sweden will concentrate more on girls' sports.

478. Chile and Croatia implemented programmes on responsible sexuality and family planning for adolescents, and engaged communities to support the introduction of reproductive health and life skills education in schools. Oman reported special measures to meet the reproductive health needs of adolescent and young adult women. Andorra has established Youth Consultation Services to prevent teenage pregnancies and to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. France required compulsory sexual health information and education in primary schools, high schools and colleges. Kazakhstan has a national strategy to protect the reproductive health of adolescents. Victims of sexual violence of all ages can now obtain emergency contraception without a medical prescription in Belgium, Chile and France. Cameroon's poverty reduction strategy paper prescribes access to reproductive health and information services for women of childbearing age and adolescent girls.

479. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS because of their physiological vulnerability, limited negotiating power, poverty, lack of education and economic independence, early marriage and sexual relations and sexual exploitation and rape. A study in Southern Africa revealed the prevalence of sexual relations between young girls and males five or ten years their senior.[71] Belgium, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic reported efforts to address gender and age dimensions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, including integration of HIV/AIDS prevention into education systems and information services and reproductive health services for adolescents.

480. Reports showed that girls and young women have radically changed their alcohol and tobacco habits in recent years, leading Governments to target girls and young women. Boys continue to outnumber girls in drug use: for example, in Albania, surveys show that the ratio of male drug users to female is at least 4:1. A study in the United States showed that although more boys than girls experimented with drugs, the number of girls using non-medical psychotherapeutics was higher than boys (3.8 versus 2.7 per cent).[72] In Mexico City, studies have shown that the

number of girls experimenting with drugs, in particular tranquillizers, was increasing (3.8 per cent lifetime prevalence compared to 2.5 per cent for boys).

481. Countries reported efforts to promote healthy nutrition and combat malnutrition in girls. In India, the Integrated Child Development Service programme gives a special focus on health and nutrition needs of girls. On the other hand, an increase in eating disorders such as bulimia, anorexia and obesity was also reported in women of all ages, including young women and girls in Sweden.

482. Mexico has begun programmes for children and adolescents with no access to basic health services. The Islamic Republic of Iran has made special efforts to promote the physical and mental health of the girl child.

483. Several States reported programmes to combat violence against children, in particular girl children, including setting up units dealing with children's issues, shelters and hotlines for ill-treated girls and female adolescents. In Argentina, the Buenos Aires directorate-general for women operated a shelter for victims of violence offering personalized care to teenage mothers. Guinea set up legal assistance centres in five communes for women and girl survivors of violence.

484. Trafficking in children and adolescents remains a great challenge. Many States have national action plans and programmes to combat trafficking, sexual exploitation of children and sex tourism. National security agencies in Spain study networks that abduct women and young girls. Brazil and Sweden have run national campaigns against trafficking women and children and sex tourism exploiting children and adolescents.

485. Latvia has a special rehabilitation programme for sexually abused children. The Netherlands reported a programme to combat sexual abuse of children. In Albania, the penalty for sexual intercourse with a girl under 13 or has not reached sexual maturity (statutory rape) is 5 to 15 years imprisonment; non-consensual intercourse with a girl over 13 but under 18 carries a 5 to 20 year sentence. Jordan protects survivors of child abuse from bearing witness in open court.

486. States have acted against female genital mutilation/cutting with legislation, action plans and awareness campaigns. Swedish law now protects girls from "honour crimes" and Belgium has made a study of the reasons for forced marriage. Special attention was given to the situation of girls in armed conflict in Colombia.

487. Member States reported progress in reducing the involvement of girls in commercial sex work. Brazil's centre to oppose child and youth violence and sexual exploitation executes the national plan and is developing a data bank. Girls are involved to a greater extent than boys in unpaid domestic labour.[73] In the Central African Republic, where 8.9 per cent of children do domestic work for more than four hours, 12 per cent are girls and 5.8 per cent are boys. The responsibilities of the girls, in Djibouti for example, include collecting and fetching water. Chile reported a programme for extremely poor young women heads of household.

488. Girls may select less promising specialities in terms of careers and earnings. In Germany, girls are encouraged to choose more promising careers through career advice centres available to all secondary school students. Morocco has reinforced girls' right to access to scientific and technological studies, as well as professional training. France has organized individualized coaching for girls in low-income

urban zones who want to create or take over a business. In Mali, girls are encouraged to pursue science and technological studies.

3. Obstacles and challenges

489. Several Member States mentioned the lack of sex-disaggregated statistics on children, in particular on such issues as violence against the girl child, including sexual violence. They further noted that available data might not reflect the true situation. For example, while educational attainment statistics indicate significant improvements for the girl child, countries are concerned that the statistics do not illustrate other gender constraints in education, such as the tendency for girls to choose study courses with fewer career possibilities. A number of countries see gender-segregated education and professional training as a challenge, especially because it results in women's lack of competitiveness in the labour market. Seychelles reported that girls were not taking technical studies and wanted to better understand the causes of this phenomenon.

490. Early marriage and pregnancy, the burden of domestic chores, lack of separate sanitary facilities and long distances to school contribute to higher drop-out rates for girls. Girls' drop-out rates in Viet Nam are higher than boys, especially in poor families. Despite gains made in Turkey, educational attainment rates for women and the girl child have remained lower than for men and vary by region and rural or urban residence.

491. Governments are aware of the need to raise the awareness of families and communities about equality and non-discrimination. In Djibouti, custom and tradition assign girls to household chores and enforce early marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting, despite awareness-raising campaigns. Marginalization and discrimination are also more likely among girls living in poverty. Viet Nam reported that as a result of poverty, girls are often trafficked and forced into commercial sex work. Early marriages pose a challenge in many Member States. Early marriage and pregnancy expose girls to the risks of early childbirth and fistula. Under-5 mortality rates are higher among girls in many countries, including Djibouti. Bangladesh raised concerns about street children.

492. Legislative gaps present a major challenge. Malawi and South Africa reported that there was no adequate legal response to widespread sex trafficking. Despite laws prohibiting discrimination against the girl child in Mauritius, de facto discrimination persists. Bahrain identified challenges in introducing legislative protection for the girl child, enforcing existing law and devising a national strategy for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Germany noted the challenge of increasing the participation of girls and young women in political, economic and social decision-making processes.

493. The serious impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on children, particularly on girls and particularly in Africa, was raised by a number of countries. The widespread belief that sexual intercourse with a virgin cures AIDS has increased the defilement of young girls and their vulnerability to HIV. In addition, as reported by the Central African Republic and Botswana, girls are increasingly called on to care for sick family members, compromising their attendance at school.

4. Conclusions

494. Reports indicated significant progress in the advancement of the girl child, especially in the recognition of her rights. Member States have ratified international treaties protecting the rights of girls and have strengthened national laws to protect the reproductive and sexual health of girls, ban sex-selective abortions, combat child labour, raise the minimum age of marriage and address violence against girl children, including child prostitution, trafficking, pornography and sexual abuse. In particular, progress has been made towards improving their access to education. Countries strove to close the gender gap in education, particularly at the primary level, and promoted a gender-sensitive educational environment for girls, both in terms of safety and educational content.

495. Further efforts are required to ensure more equal access to secondary education and that education translates into job opportunities. Additional efforts and commitment are also required to eradicate sex work by children and their involvement in sex tourism. Greater attention has to be given to ensuring reintegration of the girl child after armed conflicts, in particular girls who have been forced to follow the armed forces and have been subjected to sexual exploitation.

496. Insufficient data on youth in general, and on the girl child in particular, impede further policy development and programmes to address specific needs. Efforts are needed to conduct participatory gender-sensitive youth research, especially on HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, child prostitution and street children.

497. Life skills, sex education and empowerment programmes are vital for reducing teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS infection rates among young women and girls. Mass media campaigns and other awareness-raising efforts must target youth, both boys and girls, and use innovative media approaches and ICT. Special attention is needed to promote the leadership potential of girls and their involvement in youth-based organizations, including sports.

II. Other issues

A. Trafficking in women and girls

1. Introduction

498. The Platform for Action considered trafficking one of three strategic objectives relating to the elimination of violence against women. The Platform called on Governments to consider the ratification and enforcement of international conventions on trafficking and slavery; address the root factors that encourage trafficking; set up comprehensive victim assistance programmes; develop educational and training programmes and policies; and consider legislation to prevent sex tourism and trafficking.

499. In the outcome document of the twenty-third special session, the General Assembly reaffirmed the Platform for Action and called on Governments to adopt comprehensive anti-trafficking strategies, noting the need to prevent victims of trafficking from being prosecuted for illegal entry or residence and calling for

national coordinating mechanisms to encourage the exchange of information and reporting.

500. Seventy-two Member States reported measures to combat trafficking and the exploitation of prostitution. Overwhelmingly, States reported on measures to combat human trafficking for sexual exploitation, although some countries also referred to trafficking for forced labour and the removal of organs.

2. Achievements

International level

501. Every year, hundreds of thousands of women and children are trafficked across borders. The issue has emerged in the last decade as an area of particular concern to the international community. The Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the General Assembly have adopted resolutions and decisions on the subject. The Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights has also considered it.

502. The treaty bodies established under major international human rights instruments and the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights have also increasingly paid attention to trafficking. The treaty bodies, in particular the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, address trafficking in their dialogue with States parties. In its concluding comments, the Committee now regularly calls for comprehensive national strategies, including legislation, to combat trafficking, prosecute and punish offenders, strengthen assistance to victims, protect the human rights of trafficked women and girls and increase international, regional and bilateral cooperation. The Committee also requires that Governments give trafficked women and girls the support they need, including residence permits, so that they can provide testimony against their traffickers. Border police and law enforcement officials need training to enable them to recognize and assist victims of trafficking. The Committee also stresses the importance of addressing issues such as poverty, which in many countries forces women into prostitution and makes them vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. The Committee calls for steps to combat and suppress the exploitation of prostitution of women, including the demand for prostitution and the prosecution and punishment of those who exploit prostitutes.

503. Among the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, first appointed in 1994,[74] the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, established in 1990,[75] and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, established in 1999,[76] have regularly covered trafficking in their reports. In 2004 the Commission established a post for the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.[77] The Special Rapporteur will report annually to the Commission on Human Rights, together with recommendations on measures required to uphold and protect the human rights of the victims of trafficking.

504. One of the most significant international achievements since 1995 was the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially

Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Protocol came into force on 25 December 2003. Article 3 (a) provides a comprehensive definition of trafficking in persons: "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs".[78]

505. Other significant international achievements are the entry into force of several other United Nations conventions and protocols. Two world congresses in the past decade, one in Stockholm in 1996, and one in Yokohama, Japan, in 2001, have drawn attention to the plight of children in the world sex trade.

506. In 2002, the European Union adopted a framework decision on combating trafficking in human beings. The Council of Europe is working on a draft convention to be finalized by the end of 2004. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation adopted a convention in 2002. The Nordic-Baltic task force against trafficking in human beings was established in 2002 and the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe in 1999. In 2003, the Heads of States members of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) and Chile and Bolivia added to their joint declaration a commitment to combat trafficking. Most recently, in 2004, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization adopted a comprehensive plan to combat worldwide trafficking in persons.

507. A number of States, including Lithuania and Thailand, have signed bilateral agreements. International cooperation initiatives have led, for example, to participation in joint police actions through Interpol and Europol and to seminars, workshops and symposia for information exchange. Projects and programmes in countries of origin for prevention and reintegration are often funded by countries of destination.

508. International organizations are supporting cross-national anti-trafficking projects, such as ILO's Mekong Subregional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women. The International Organization for Migration supports anti-trafficking efforts in a number of countries and regions. Some countries, such as Sweden and Switzerland, now include the fight against trafficking in their development cooperation activities.

National level

509. The national responses showed that measures at the country level increasingly combine prevention, prosecution and protection. This is reflected in legislative reform; national strategies to combat trafficking and exploitation of prostitution; studies on the extent of trafficking; institutional mechanisms to coordinate anti-trafficking activities; and measures to prevent trafficking and to protect victims.

510. Over 50 countries indicated that they either amended their laws or initiated legislative reforms to address trafficking and the exploitation of prostitution. Some States such as Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, New Zealand and

Sweden, brought their legislation into line with the Palermo Protocol or other international and regional human rights instruments. Sweden's new legislation on human trafficking goes beyond the definition set out in the Palermo Protocol and extends criminal liability to trafficking within the country's borders.

511. Countries increased penalties for offenders, improved investigation procedures and enhanced protection and rehabilitation. In 2003, Kyrgyzstan amended its criminal code to make the offence of human trafficking punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment and/or confiscation of property. Similar measures have been taken in Algeria, Denmark, Iceland, the Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom. In Denmark, legislation in 2002 improved investigation possibilities concerning intervention in the secrecy of communication. In Greece, under Presidential Decree 233/2003, victims of prostitution, trafficking and slavery are now entitled to accommodation, nutrition, care, psychological support, legal aid and professional training. Similar measures were reported by Australia and the United States.

512. Many countries enhanced victim and witness protection, inter alia: ensuring anonymity during trials as in Bulgaria; allowing victims and witnesses to testify in the absence of defendants from courtrooms in Poland; and providing temporary or permanent residence permits to victims of trafficking in Canada, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United States. Although countries may make residence permits conditional on the willingness of victims to collaborate with investigations, in some States victims of trafficking may request a residence permit based on social protection grounds, as is the case in Italy, on humanitarian and compassionate considerations or as refugees, without being obliged to report the crime to the police.

513. Countries adopted different legislative approaches against the exploitation of women for prostitution: for instance, the Netherlands legalized prostitution in October 2000, while Sweden made the purchase of sexual services illegal in January 1999. Many Member States paid particular attention through legislation to the elimination of the sexual exploitation and prostitution of minors. Some States also adopted or revised legislation to eliminate child sex tourism, including Colombia and the United States, and to combat child pornography.

514. Twelve Member States reported adopting national anti-trafficking plans of action or strategies and four reported plans of action to combat the sexual exploitation of women, including the exploitation of prostitution. Denmark's plan focuses on the prevention of trafficking and support of victims of trafficking and prostitution.

515. Several Member States indicated that their plans of action to improve the status of women and promote gender equality also address trafficking. Other Member States reported anti-trafficking components in policy instruments, such as national programmes on human rights (Kyrgyzstan); plans of action on violence against women (Nepal); plans of action to eliminate the sexual exploitation and abuse of children (Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, the Netherlands and Spain); plans of action against crime (Thailand); and national policies on poverty alleviation (Thailand). Seven Member States had prepared plans of action and strategies against trafficking.

516. Some countries reported data collection and research to help in designing appropriate responses, and some donor countries, the United Nations and other

international bodies funded these activities. Since 2000, for example, the Polish Border Guard has collected data related to trafficking, including people arrested and suspects detained; preparatory proceedings initiated and completed; and the outcome of proceedings.

517. The National Human Rights Commission of India investigated attitudes of public officials working on trafficking issues in 11 states. As a result, 21 States have appointed focal points to ensure attention to trafficking as part of the human rights agenda. The Government of Germany published a study in 2004 on why the number of trafficking trials was declining while the number of victims was not.

518. Awareness of the importance of integrated coordination mechanisms and better exchange of information increased among governmental bodies and NGOs. Many countries reported national mechanisms to coordinate anti-trafficking activities, including inter-ministerial bodies; parliamentary bodies; working groups; task forces; commissions; special rapporteurs; special representatives; and ombudsmen.

519. In April 2000, the Netherlands was the first country to appoint an independent national rapporteur on trafficking. The rapporteur, who reports directly to the Government, provides insights into origins, factors and trends, and is an important driving force in preventing and combating trafficking. Nepal appointed a national representative in 2003 to oversee and monitor anti-trafficking activities. Bulgaria established regional groups in 2002 to complement the national commission on trafficking. Some countries have established institutional mechanisms to address prostitution and the exploitation of children.

520. Some countries use the police to deal with trafficking and prostitution. The Australian Federal Police have set up a mobile strike team to investigate trafficking and sexual servitude.

521. Effective anti-trafficking strategies include awareness-raising and information campaigns as well as capacity-building and cross-border cooperation efforts to prevent women from becoming victims of trafficking. They also address the root causes of trafficking, such as poverty in countries of origin and demand in countries of destination. Many countries reported a combination of different prevention measures; for instance the Lithuanian national programme includes educational, socio-economic and medical measures, as well as legislation.

522. Most countries focused on awareness-raising and information. In the last three years, the Nordic-Baltic campaign against trafficking in women and girls has improved knowledge and generated public discussion and awareness. Information activities focused on prevention and awareness-raising measures to change gender stereotypes. Several countries trained and added to the skills of Government officials, consular personnel, law enforcement agents, police officers, social workers, health workers, teachers and other professionals. Some donor countries, such as the United States, have supported training for government officials, prosecutors and judges in developing countries.

523. Some countries, such as Kyrgyzstan and Poland, have emphasized stronger border controls and better identity documents. For example, Kyrgyzstan has new internal and foreign passports and temporary certificates and has increased penalties for forging documents.

524. Governments increasingly recognize the importance of giving women migrants the tools to reduce their vulnerability to trafficking. Some countries, including Armenia and the Russian Federation, have set up immigration offices and telephone hotlines to provide information on safe migration and provide information kits to women going abroad.

525. Vigorous investigation and prosecution and increased penalties deter traffickers. For example, the United States began 210 investigations and prosecuted 110 traffickers between 2001 and 2003.

526. Many countries in all regions acted to protect and support victims of trafficking with measures such as telephone hotlines; shelters; counselling services; legal assistance; job training; loans; and residence permits. Bulgaria set up temporary shelters and centres for protection and assistance, where victims receive psychological assistance and medical care. In Denmark, "street teams" gave social, health and legal advice to foreign women who may be subject to exploitation. Burkina Faso gave victims of trafficking loans for income-generating activities.

527. Some countries gave financial and other assistance to victims to encourage cooperation with the police. A number of countries also supported victims' reintegration in their countries of origin. Australia established a reintegration assistance project for trafficking victims from south-east Asia. An international network of Danish and foreign NGOs set up in 2003 will improve repatriation procedures.

3. Obstacles and challenges

528. One of the main challenges ahead is how to improve understanding of trafficking and prostitution in order to address root causes rather than symptoms and consequences. Trafficking and other forms of sexual violence are at times treated as social problems and given less attention than other types of violent crimes. On the other hand, many anti-trafficking strategies emphasize a criminal justice approach and neglect gender and human rights concerns. Measures are fragmented and isolated rather than part of a comprehensive strategy, including prevention, prosecution and protection.

529. Better data and more research are needed: some Member States, including Kyrgyzstan and Lithuania, pointed out the lack of sex-disaggregated statistics. Others, such as Cyprus, found the reluctance of women victims to report trafficking and exploitation, or to seek support and assistance, to be an obstacle.

530. Although most countries can prosecute crimes related to trafficking and the exploitation of prostitution, many countries still lack specific legislation, a lacuna that hampers both protection and prosecution. Legislation does not always clearly address the status of victims of trafficking: victims are not always protected from prosecution for illegal migration or labour law violations, nor as persons whose human rights have been violated and who are in need of protection and support.

531. Some Member States pointed out countries' lack of means to combat the sophisticated criminal organizations that control trafficking, while others remarked on the ineffectiveness of unilateral responses.

532. Lack of gender sensitivity among professionals working on trafficking issues is a challenge. Some countries, including Malawi, identified the need to train law

enforcement agents to deal with human trafficking. Others pointed to the shortage of assistance, specifically for women prostitutes or victims of trafficking.

533. One of the most important challenges is to link the fight against trafficking in human beings with comprehensive policies and projects for women's economic empowerment. Although some States recognized poverty as one of the root causes of trafficking, there are few poverty alleviation programmes for women. Measures to promote safe migration are inadequate and women in many countries have unrealistic expectations about foreign labour markets and job opportunities.

4. Conclusions

534. Much progress has been made in the fight against trafficking, and countries are giving some priority to the challenge. In particular, international instruments and mechanisms are in place and many countries have adopted anti-trafficking legislation and have taken the necessary policy measures. Progress is uneven, however, across countries and regions: while many countries, particularly in Western and Eastern Europe, North America and Asia, have adopted a range of measures to combat or prevent trafficking, the fight has not always been given priority in other regions.

535. In order to successfully combat trafficking, States should adopt and actively implement comprehensive, multidisciplinary and gender-sensitive strategies. Approaches should include adoption and consistent enforcement of anti-trafficking legislation in line with international instruments to which States are party, as well as the implementation of policy measures aimed at preventing trafficking, punishing offenders and protecting victims. It is particularly important that the prosecution of offenders is complemented by effective measures to protect victims from prosecution for illegal migration and empower them to break out of a cycle of victimization.

536. Efforts are also needed to prevent trafficking by addressing its root causes, including: poverty among women; displacement as a result of natural and human-made catastrophes; discrimination against women in law and practice; and gender-based violence in families and communities.

537. In order to respond effectively to cross-border and transnational trafficking, States should ratify international instruments and coordinate action against traffickers and trafficking networks through regional, subregional and bilateral agreements. They should exchange information on good practices with other countries of origin, transit and destination. At the same time, all parties concerned, including judicial and law enforcement personnel, migration authorities, NGOs, civil society groups and academic institutions, should collaborate in the design and implementation of a comprehensive and multidisciplinary national approach to trafficking.

538. Better data collection and research are also needed, as are mechanisms to monitor measures to combat trafficking and the exploitation of prostitution, assess their impact and undertake further corrective measures.

B. Women and HIV/AIDS

1. Introduction

539. The Platform for Action addressed HIV/AIDS under the critical area of concern on health and committed Governments to undertake gender-sensitive initiatives to address HIV/AIDS. The Platform called on Governments to take numerous actions to implement this commitment, inter alia: to ensure the involvement of women in all decision-making related to the development and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; to review laws and combat practices that may contribute to women's susceptibility to HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases; and to develop compassionate and supportive non-discrimination HIV/AIDS-related policies and practices, which protect the rights of infected women.

540. In the outcome documents of its twenty-third special session, the General Assembly identified HIV/AIDS as one of the major challenges to full implementation of the Platform for Action. It adopted several priority areas for further action, including key actions adopted at the five-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development, including specific benchmarks to reduce young people's risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

541. The outcome document (General Assembly resolution S-23/3) called for priority programmes to prevent, detect and treat sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and to respond to the new demands for service and care for women and girls resulting from the epidemic. It also called for programmes to encourage and enable men to adopt safe and responsible sexual and reproductive behaviour, encouraging the use of the media to raise awareness of traditional practices that increase women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and recommending the adoption of measures to eliminate discrimination and ensure respect for people living with those disorders.

542. In 2001, at its twenty-sixth special session on HIV/AIDS, the General Assembly proposed new strategies for international cooperation. The special session's Declaration of Commitment[79] included gender perspectives on alleviating the pandemic's impact.

2. Achievements

543. The great majority of countries reported on HIV/AIDS. Most countries established national programmes, strategic frameworks, plans or policies to systematically address HIV/AIDS. Other countries set up coordinating bodies. Ethiopia formed a National Coalition of Women against HIV/AIDS. Botswana, Guatemala, Paraguay and Mauritania charged their women's affairs departments with mainstreaming gender perspectives throughout the health system. Botswana commissioned a gender issues paper as an advocacy tool for senior policy makers, politicians and members of the National AIDS Council. Brazil developed a gender perspective on HIV/AIDS that includes responsible fatherhood. In India, the National AIDS Control and Prevention Policy specifically mentions the right of HIV-positive women to make their own decisions regarding pregnancy and childbirth.

544. Countries reported legislation on HIV/AIDS, but few took gender issues into account in legislation. In some countries, gender-sensitive legislation was limited to preventing mother-to-child transmission. The Central African Republic, China and the Russian Federation authorized abortion in cases of HIV/AIDS infection. Several countries adopted legislation to prevent the spread of the disease. Others acted to protect the rights of HIV-positive persons.

545. Other countries advocated countering the stigma of HIV/AIDS by promoting education and training. Dominica, for instance, has a continuous education programme to reduce stigma and support HIV/AIDS patients. Malawi trained 80 focal points from the Government and civil society on the gender and human rights dimensions of HIV/AIDS.

546. Several countries reported on the involvement of women's organizations in AIDS prevention. The AIDS Centre in Azerbaijan helped form an association of HIV/AIDS patients and their families, with doctors, jurists, psychologists and sociologists providing assistance. Cameroon's HIV/AIDS programme trained women leaders in civil society and government and organized events for people living with HIV/AIDS.

547. Ten countries indicated that they collected data disaggregated by such variables as sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation and state of health. In Italy, HIV/AIDS is the fourth leading cause of death for women and the fifth for men. Chile mentioned an increase in the proportion of women among HIV/AIDS cases and that the principal means of transmission (93.8 per cent of cases in 2001) was sexual contact. Some countries provided data on the incidence of HIV/AIDS among specific groups of women. Mexico reported that the worst-affected group of women were female prison inmates (1.4 per cent), followed by women suffering from tuberculosis (0.6 per cent), female sex workers (0.35 per cent) and pregnant women (0.09 per cent). Djibouti confirmed young women's vulnerability: according to a 2002 survey, the incidence of HIV/AIDS was 2.9 per cent among all women in the country, although as high as 6 per cent among women aged between 15 and 35. The Russian Federation started collecting data on births to infected women and the number of children they have had.

548. Governments reported important progress in collecting data on factors contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Canada recently announced a doubling of funding for its strategy on HIV/AIDS, which supported research on perinatal HIV transmission and microbicides. Sweden reported on research attributing the decline in mother-to-child transmission to the increased use of antiretroviral drugs for pregnant women and births by caesarean section. Following a sharp increase in infections among women, Thailand concluded that married women were less able to protect themselves because they could not refuse sex with their husbands.

549. A few countries reported on collaboration with NGOs to address gender issues in HIV/AIDS. NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have researched women's rights, trafficking, domestic violence, prostitution and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Malawi formed partnerships with NGOs to combat gender-based violence. In Norway, NGOs receiving public grants for HIV programming must include a gender perspective in their proposals, which has encouraged networks among HIV-positive women. Venezuela extended credits to NGOs serving people living with HIV/AIDS and vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, sero-positive mothers and women in rehabilitation from sexual exploitation.

550. All countries recognized the need to work on prevention. Several countries developed systems to certify the safety of donated blood. Japan promoted awareness on ways to prevent infectious diseases. Malawi promoted abstinence, limiting the number of sexual partners and delaying sexual relations. It also introduced youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services in some health centres and hospitals. Several countries, including Japan, Cameroon and Malawi, encouraged use of condoms or distributed free condoms. In the Netherlands, promoting consistent condom use was central to HIV prevention among sex workers and their clients. Its national message for young people was that condom use should be the norm. Namibia provided free female condoms.

551. Twenty-three countries mentioned media campaigns to inform citizens about HIV prevention; promote voluntary counselling and testing; raise the awareness of customs and behaviour that increase vulnerability to HIV/AIDS; and relay messages intended to change such behaviours. China targeted youth while Germany and Italy addressed the needs of women and young girls. El Salvador focused on mother-to-child transmission. Finland concentrated on the stigma of HIV/AIDS, while Guinea informed its nationals on pathways of HIV transmission.

552. Kyrgyzstan, Liberia and Malawi reported expanding their mass media campaigns. Malawi distributed posters, leaflets, manuals and booklets on sexual and reproductive health of women and the general population. Argentina, Guinea and Nicaragua developed large-scale social communications programmes to secure behavioural change and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. Argentina and Kyrgyzstan used television commercials for young people on prevention; toll-free hotlines and telephone counselling services for HIV/AIDS; 24-hour anonymous consultation and testing services and various print materials. Uzbekistan and Viet Nam developed Internet programmes on HIV/AIDS information and counselling.

553. Twenty-five countries reported on formal and informal educational programmes to develop young people's life skills and their ability to make informed decisions to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Nineteen countries included HIV/AIDS awareness-raising in the curricula of primary schools, secondary schools, higher education institutions and teacher training. Several countries revised their curricula to include an HIV/AIDS component. Azerbaijan extended its education programme to parents by sharing student booklets and leaflets, which promote safe and responsible sexual behaviours, prevention and healthy lifestyles. The Central African Republic established a project in schools to raise awareness on health, polygamy, excision, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. The project also trained peer educators and teachers to spread prevention messages.

554. A few countries reported on training workshops in prevention and counselling for staff of government offices and women leaders in the communities. Barbados trained staff on gender relations and the gender dynamics of HIV/AIDS. The Dominican Republic designed training strategies for women leaders and the staff of provincial and municipal offices for women.

555. Increasingly, programmes encourage men and male adolescents to adopt responsible sexual and reproductive behaviours. In Barbados, the Bureau of Gender Affairs joined with men's organizations to support self-development and counselling programmes. Honduras hosted a men's workshop on delivering sexual and reproductive health services. Bulgaria raised awareness among doctors through training in reproductive health, gender equality and HIV/AIDS.

556. Governments increased access of women and girls to treatment, care and support, improving and extending the reach of services; preventing and treating mother-to-child transmission; introducing home-based care; reaching vulnerable women and girls; and eliminating discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.

557. Most countries have broadened access to antiretroviral therapy, while a few distribute free drugs and treat all women and children patients with HIV/AIDS free of charge. In Argentina, public hospitals met the full cost of testing, care and drugs for women without social security coverage or prepaid medical care. Hunan province in China provided free confidential testing and services to prevent mother-to-child transmission. Free antiretroviral drugs for pregnant women were also available in Finland and India.

558. Many countries provided confidential testing to all clients. Countries also reported on various strategies to increase women's access to testing and treatment. Belize, Kyrgyzstan and Liberia opened new voluntary testing and counselling centres. The Syrian Arab Republic opened more centres to diagnose and treat sexually transmitted diseases. Several countries started anonymous phone services, 24-hour hotlines and anonymous consultation and testing service. Ethiopia established a national testing system for pregnant women.

559. Countries reported reaching out to vulnerable groups of women. Algeria provided gynaecological and supplementary examinations for battered women, including testing for HIV/AIDS. Finland increased its outreach through needle exchange programmes, anonymous counselling centres and free services for sex workers in Helsinki. India launched a campaign to generate awareness among slum residents and other vulnerable women. Kyrgyzstan provided informational and educational materials and counselled young people, commercial sex workers and other high-risk individuals on HIV/AIDS prevention. Canada's Federal Government supported the Pauktutuit Inuit Women's Association in its efforts to provide HIV education, prevention, care, treatment and support.

560. One third of all countries reporting on HIV/AIDS had national policies and programmes to reduce or prevent mother-to-child transmission, making it the main focus of programmes addressing women and HIV. India adopted the term "parent-to-child transmission" instead of mother-to-child transmission to illustrate the responsibility of male partners. Countries reported systematic screening for pregnant women and progress in increasing access to services to prevent mother-to-child transmission. These include testing and counselling; provision of prophylaxis; drug regimes; and advice and care before, during and after birth. Argentina began providing infant formula to prevent transmission through breastfeeding. Uzbekistan set up a working group to develop a national policy and strategy for preventing mother-to-child transmission.

561. Argentina, Ecuador and the Russian Federation made testing compulsory for pregnant women. A number of countries passed legislation to ensure informed consent before testing pregnant women.

3. Obstacles and challenges

562. Lack of resources and accessibility to care were the most widely reported challenges to prevent and combat HIV/AIDS among women. Other obstacles

included harmful traditional practices, stigma, women's illiteracy, poverty and dependence, mass movement of people and substance abuse.

563. African countries especially noted lack of resources and accessibility. These countries also reported limited access to voluntary testing and counselling and poor quality of health services in general. Dominica and the Seychelles mentioned the challenge of providing antiretroviral drugs to women.

564. Several Governments faced the challenge of developing a coordinated and integrated approach with multiple actions to: change behaviours, including discrimination and violence; generate income for women and orphans; and treat and care for those infected. India identified the need to build capacity among individuals, institutions and networks to enhance the multisectoral approach. Honduras noted that the focus on HIV/AIDS reduced attention to other sexually transmitted diseases.

565. Countries pointed to illiteracy among women, including lack of knowledge about reproductive health and sexual relations, as contributing factors in the spread of HIV/AIDS. Some countries reported that illiteracy made it hard to disseminate information on HIV/AIDS prevention. The Congo referred to the lack of sex education and attributed women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS to men's ignorance and attitudes. Norway and Viet Nam noted that measures to increase the awareness of men's role in spreading HIV/AIDS had not received sufficient attention.

566. Several countries recognized that empowering women was a challenge they must address. They noted that poverty and economic dependence contributed to women's inability to negotiate sexual relations, including reproductive choices and safe sex. A number of African countries noted that harmful traditional practices challenged efforts to curb the epidemic and contributed to the vulnerability of women and girls. In addition the death of a husband from AIDS left the widow as head of family, and therefore more exposed to poverty. Violence against women was a challenge cited by Belize, the Central African Republic and Liberia. Guinea noted the persistence of stigma and discrimination against women with HIV/AIDS.

567. Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania reported that the HIV/AIDS epidemic was increasing women's household responsibilities and preventing their empowerment. Women often assumed the responsibility of children orphaned by AIDS. Home-based care lightened the burden on medical institutions and relieved pressure on health professionals, although it had transferred the load to girls and women, including grandmothers, particularly in the rural areas. Girls were more likely than boys to miss school to care for parents or siblings with AIDS or perform household chores.

4. Conclusions

568. **Most country responses documented progress to protect the rights of HIV-positive women, increase access to treatment, establish national coordination mechanisms and reduce women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, including by promoting men's involvement. Governments acknowledged the complexity of addressing and researching factors that contribute to the spread of the pandemic and make women more vulnerable to AIDS, including unequal gender relations; discrimination and stigma; violence against women; and traditions and social norms. Several countries mounted information and**

education campaigns for specific population groups such as students, adolescent girls, young men, men and women living in rural areas and illiterate people.

569. **Although efforts have been made to prevent mother-to-child transmission, implementation of a comprehensive gender-sensitive approach to combating HIV/AIDS remains to be achieved. There is a need to guarantee access to antiretrovirals for women at risk, irrespective of pregnancy status. Testing of pregnant women must always be voluntary and based on women's informed consent.**

570. **As well as ensuring women's universal access to prevention, care and treatment, using a comprehensive, gender-sensitive reproductive and sexual health framework, Governments need to explicitly address a number of key issues related to prevention: reducing the vulnerability of women and girls in negotiating abstinence or safe sex; increasing women's economic independence; and addressing needs of vulnerable groups such as widows and migrants.**

571. **The critical linkages between violence against women and HIV/AIDS need further explicit attention. An increased focus should also be given to male attitudes and behaviour and to promoting responsible sexual relationships. Countries need to do more to emphasize men's roles and responsibilities for HIV/AIDS prevention, including in parent-to-child transmission, and for care of infected family members.**

C. Indigenous women

1. Introduction

572. The Beijing Platform for Action identified indigenous women among those who encounter particular barriers to full equality and advancement, both as women and as members of their communities. It found that indigenous women were particularly vulnerable to violence and faced additional barriers to enjoyment of their human rights because they are indigenous women. The Platform recommended action on their behalf in several critical areas of concern, including poverty, education, health, decision-making and the environment. In addition, the Platform repeatedly referred to indigenous women as one of the groups that required particular attention in actions and initiatives.

573. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session reiterated these concerns and expanded actions aimed at supporting indigenous women in overcoming challenges in areas such as education, training and research, the elimination of violence, and poverty eradication and sustainable development.

2. Achievements

International level

574. Over the past decade, the international community has become increasingly aware of the challenges and obstacles indigenous women face in their daily lives. The establishment of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People 1995-2004, the office of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous

people and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues have given impetus to more systematic and sustained attention to the situation of indigenous women. These mechanisms have also encouraged targeted action on behalf of indigenous women and increased the incorporation of gender perspectives in activities to enhance the situation and well-being of indigenous peoples in general. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences has also paid attention to the vulnerabilities of indigenous women.

575. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues devoted its third session in 2004 to the topic of indigenous women, highlighting the continuing and newly emerging challenges that they face. The Forum's proposals to address more effectively the multiple forms of discrimination suffered by indigenous women in areas such as human rights, economic and social development, education, health, migration, the environment and culture now constitute a basis for action at national and international level.

576. The Commission on the Status of Women has referred to the situation of indigenous women in relation to several themes covered in recent years, including poverty eradication and combating discrimination, in particular racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Commission on Human Rights has also referred to indigenous women in several of its resolutions. Global events such as the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, 2001) furthered the interests of indigenous women.

577. While the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women does not explicitly mention indigenous women, States parties are increasingly taking steps to ensure that they also fulfil their obligations under the Convention towards indigenous women. Over the past 10 years, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has given systematic review to the situation of indigenous women in reporting States.

578. The Committee has drawn attention to the inadequacy of information about indigenous women and to significant disparities compared to non-indigenous women in regard to many of the rights protected under the Convention. It has consistently raised issues such as indigenous poverty among women, their educational and health status and their vulnerability to all forms of violence and has provided guidance to the concerned States parties on meeting the challenge. The Committee has urged a multifaceted approach to eliminating discrimination against indigenous women. It has invited States to introduce protective legislation to benefit indigenous women and to develop and implement gender-focused policies and programmes. It has called on States parties to improve access to decision-making processes and to introduce awareness-raising and educational campaigns to combat stereotypes regarding indigenous women.

579. A number of regional and international conferences since the Fourth World Conference on Women have focused on the particular issues faced by indigenous women, including the first[80] and second Continental Conferences of Indigenous Women of Africa, the second Asian Indigenous Women's Conference,[81] the first Continental Summit of Indigenous Women of the Americas,[82] the first to fourth Continental Meetings of Indigenous Women of the Americas[83] and the first and second Women's World Assembly of Via Campesina.[84] Since 2000, the International

Indigenous Women's Forum has continued to promote the rights of indigenous women in international forums.

National developments

580. The increasing visibility of the situation of indigenous women at the international level is complemented by greater attention at the national level on the part of Governments and civil society. In response to the questionnaire, 24 Governments provided information on indigenous women. Governmental action for indigenous women frequently reflected the approach of the Platform for Action, which called for targeted activities to support them in overcoming marginalization and exclusion. At the same time, Governments recognized that the concerns of indigenous women must be an integral part of all policy-making aimed at the advancement of women.

581. There are over 150 million indigenous women throughout the world. Most live in rural communities at or below the poverty line. Indigenous women's economic exclusion has been confirmed by research, such as the baseline studies carried out by Bolivia in 2003. Data provided by Canada indicated that in 2000, 38 per cent of aboriginal women lived in low-income situations. As a consequence, Governments, such as Canada and Finland, placed new emphasis on eliminating their discrimination and marginalization through strategies, policies and other measures. Several national action plans for the advancement of women also reflected attention to the situation of indigenous women as a cross-cutting issue. Plans or policies for the development of indigenous or ethnic people (Mexico and Nepal) highlighted gender perspectives and outlined targeted actions with and on behalf of indigenous women. Sectoral strategies, policies or benefit schemes sometimes included special components for indigenous women (Canada and Paraguay), or required non-discriminatory and equitable access for women and indigenous people (Mexico).

582. Where Governments adopted measures affecting indigenous populations, indigenous women were included among the beneficiaries. For example, Peru's constitution of 2002 established minimum percentages for representation by sex, native community and aboriginal population in regional and municipal elections. Other countries, including Finland and Guatemala, enacted legislation to protect the rights of indigenous women. Mexico prescribed that public actions taken on behalf of indigenous peoples and communities must be based on prior consultations with them, include a gender perspective and promote the participation of indigenous women.

583. Responses to the questionnaire, especially from Latin America, indicated that strategies aimed at combating poverty were expected to improve the quality of life of indigenous women, particularly in rural communities, and focused on enhancing their economic empowerment and autonomy. They included skills development and childcare programmes as well as capacity-building components to facilitate indigenous women's active participation in economic development. Countries adopted funding mechanisms to improve employment options and entrepreneurial opportunities for indigenous women in agriculture, livestock and handicrafts (Mexico, Norway). Aboriginal women in Canada directly benefited from the childcare and job creation components of the federal aboriginal human resources development strategy.

584. Countries saw education as a key mechanism for the empowerment of indigenous women and girls and for closing the gap between their economic and social well-being and that of the general population. The national education plans of several Governments promoted greater accessibility to education for indigenous people, including women and girls living in rural and remote communities (Bolivia, Nepal and Panama). Elimination of school fees for people below the poverty line directly benefited indigenous girls (Nepal), and the use of local languages in primary education was seen as a means for increasing the enrolment rates of girls, including indigenous girls. Countries enhanced indigenous women's life-long learning, in particular in Canada.

585. A number of Governments took steps to overcome barriers to health care faced by indigenous women, such as geographic isolation, cultural and linguistic barriers, poor economic status and racial or ethnic discrimination. Measures included health-care strategies and capacity-building programmes to improve access to sexual and reproductive and maternal and child health services for indigenous women, sometimes in cooperation with NGOs, as was the case in Mexico and Panama. Canada provided federal support for indigenous women in a range of health-related areas, including HIV/AIDS, cervical cancer and diabetes.

586. A number of responses spoke of increasing attention to anti-violence strategies, with the active participation of indigenous women, to break the cycle of violence throughout their life span. For instance, the Governments of Australia and Canada made grants to assist local and national indigenous NGOs in building capacity to prevent and address domestic and family violence within their communities. Countries have expanded culturally-appropriate services and shelters for abused women, implemented preventive outreach programmes and encouraged the teaching of traditional values and practices. Colombia gave support to indigenous communities displaced within the country by violence and facilitated their return to their territories. Mexico has implemented campaigns in indigenous languages to eradicate violence.

587. Several Governments addressed the absence or underrepresentation of indigenous women in public life and the political sphere, including by means of awareness-raising campaigns. For instance, 22 municipalities in El Salvador implemented gender-focused measures to encourage the participation of rural and indigenous women in decision-making processes and local politics.

588. A number of Governments established institutional mechanisms specifically mandated to address the situation of indigenous women. In Canada, a network of local gender equality representatives supports the implementation of the gender equality analysis policy among indigenous populations. In Guatemala, several offices are tasked with supporting indigenous women, including the Office for the Defence of Indigenous Women's Rights, which promotes strict observance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In many instances, governmental mechanisms work with or support NGOs. In many countries, NGOs raise land tenure concerns and represent the economic, political and cultural interests of indigenous women at the national and regional levels. Other NGOs concentrated on the empowerment of indigenous women through capacity-building, including their participation in decision-making processes.

589. Several Governments have encouraged indigenous peoples, particularly indigenous women, to apply their knowledge for the benefit of sustainable

development. For instance, in Colombia, where well over a quarter of indigenous families are headed by women, indigenous families are enabled to abandon the cultivation of illicit crops and indigenous women are encouraged to protect and preserve Colombia's biodiversity. A sustainable development programme for the Chaco region of Paraguay offers courses for campesino and indigenous women in areas such as poultry farming, sheep and goat breeding, bee-keeping, farming and food production. The programme also conducted a study on women's interests in the region.

3. Obstacles and challenges

590. Lack of political will and effort on the part of Governments in support of indigenous peoples in general and indigenous women in particular were seen as major reasons for slow progress in the Philippines. In the responses the lack of awareness about the situation of indigenous women, and the indifference on the part of the media to their cultural, social or developmental concerns, was noted.

591. Some responses confirmed that indigenous women as a group suffer disproportionately from extreme poverty and economic and social exclusion. The inconsistent or discriminatory application of national legislation, policies and administrative practices, as noted in Canada, and socio-economic development models that prioritize economic prosperity, as evidenced in Ecuador, create particular disadvantages for indigenous women. A number of Governments acknowledged that indigenous women are subject to multiple forms of discrimination, resulting in limited access to credit and financial resources and land ownership. Economic barriers were often compounded by exclusion from participation in decision-making processes.

592. Countries such as Bolivia and Canada noted that indigenous women are also disadvantaged in regard to employment, with significant wage gaps between indigenous women, non-indigenous women and men. Higher underemployment and unemployment has led many indigenous women to accept precarious work. Inadequate day care further limits their employment options. In Guatemala, it was noted that institutions charged with promotion of the interests of indigenous women do not have the resources to work effectively.

593. Discrimination in education against indigenous women and girls is reflected in lower levels of literacy; low enrolment and high drop-out rates; limited access to educational programmes or institutions; paucity of educational programmes in indigenous languages; and the absence of financial resources. Indigenous girls in rural areas are especially disadvantaged. In Canada, Finland and Viet Nam, ensuring indigenous women's access to general and specialized health-care services was an ongoing concern.

594. Indigenous women are more vulnerable to and continue to experience higher levels of all forms of violence than non-indigenous women, including the consequences of armed conflict, as seen in Colombia and Ecuador. They do not yet participate effectively in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Indigenous women are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence. Despite various campaigns and assistance in Australia, Brazil and Canada, effective measures to prevent, and respond to domestic violence in indigenous communities are still rare.

4. Conclusions

595. **Governments, NGOs and the international community have enhanced the situation of indigenous women and acted to protect their rights and freedoms. However, in the light of the many remaining obstacles and challenges, which include multiple forms of discrimination based on gender, race and ethnicity, and the impact of globalization and environmental degradation, comprehensive measures must be implemented to address all forms of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion that keep indigenous women from a full enjoyment of their rights. Lack of data about indigenous women disaggregated by sex, race and ethnicity remains an impediment to effective policy-making and the development of remedial measures. Measures based on good data are needed specifically for the benefit of indigenous women. All policies related to the critical areas of concern, especially those regarding socio-economic development, should integrate the perspectives and knowledge of indigenous women. It is critical that indigenous women fully and effectively participate in all stages of the design and implementation of such policies and have effective access to decision-making processes. Cooperation and coordination with non-governmental and indigenous women's organizations working to enhance the situation of indigenous women should be pursued as a matter of priority. Successful implementation of such measures will require adequate financial and technical support from States and the international community.**

D. Information and communication technologies

1. Introduction

596. The Beijing Platform for Action called for the empowerment of women through enhancing their skills, knowledge and access to and use of information technology. The Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session both contain a number of recommendations related to ICT. They cover access, education and training, employment and economic empowerment, networking and dissemination of information, decision-making and balanced and diverse information content.

597. The Millennium Declaration underscored the urgency of ensuring that the benefits of new technologies, especially in the areas of information and communications, be available to all. A United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force, which was launched in November 2001, recognized the potential of ICT for promoting gender equality, improving women's educational, health and economic opportunities and enhancing their participation in public life.

598. At its forty-seventh session in 2003, the Commission on the Status of Women considered the relationship between ICT and gender equality for the first time. The Commission noted the substantial global differences in participation in, access to and use of media and ICT. It underscored the need for a focus on the gender dimensions of ICT, first, to prevent the digital revolution having an adverse impact on gender equality; and second, to avoid perpetuating existing inequalities and discrimination, including the sexual exploitation of women, through traditional media or new technologies.

599. The World Summit on the Information Society, held in December 2003 in Geneva and to be held in November 2005 in Tunis, witnessed the active participation of women's groups and networks to incorporate gender perspectives in the outcome documents of the summit. In the Declaration of Principles[85] (2003), it was noted that development of ICT provided enormous opportunities for women. Member States committed themselves to enabling women's empowerment and full participation on the basis of equality, mainstreaming gender equality perspectives and using ICT as a tool for women's empowerment. The Plan of Action[86] emphasized removing gender barriers to ICT education and training and promoting equal training opportunities in ICT-related fields for women and girls. Governments, in collaboration with other stakeholders, were encouraged to: formulate ICT policies conducive to the participation of women; develop best practices for e-workers and e-employers built on principles of gender equality; and increase employment opportunities for women through teleworking. Gender-specific indicators on ICT use and needs should be developed and measurable performance indicators identified to assess the impact of funded ICT projects on the lives of women and girls.

2. Achievements

600. Of Member State responses, 66 contained information related to gender equality and ICT. Governments recognized the power and potential of ICT, but they expressed increasing concern that the digital divide would deepen, both among and within countries. A number of Governments noted the importance of telecentres or multipurpose community centres to improve access to telephones, fax machines, computers and the Internet, and emphasized that women should have easy access to them. Cameroon developed a project to promote income-generating activities through community telecentres in rural areas. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the rural knowledge network (ReefNet) project brought information technology to rural areas and specifically encouraged computer use by rural women.

601. Reliable information on access disaggregated by sex is usually available only in countries with high connectivity. For example, Cyprus, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Singapore noted the difference in use between women and men as well as older and younger generations. In Luxembourg, 75 per cent of men of 35-years of age used the Internet, but only 50 per cent of women. Beyond 50-years of age, 50 per cent of men were connected, but only 25 per cent of women.

602. While most national ICT policies still did not incorporate gender issues, countries reported examples of efforts made in different regions. In Asia, the Republic of Korea established a proactive ICT policy towards gender equality. It also developed a basic plan for women's informatization (2002-2006) and allocated budgets for women's ICT education. From 2000 to 2002, more than four million women benefited from government programmes on the use of the computer and Internet. Many of these programmes were at facilities with day care, making them more accessible to women with children. In Latin America, Ecuador sought to expand access to ICT to the general population and narrow digital divides. In Europe, Germany and Sweden were developing inclusive ICT policies that addressed gender equality issues. Targeted policy initiatives were also reported by some countries: Malaysia, for example, established a technical working group on women and ICT in 2002, responsible for designing strategies and programmes on ICT for women and family.

603. Several countries promoted ICT education and training, especially for girls and women. Some of these initiatives focused on particular groups: for example, Austria supported training programmes for women in rural areas and the Islamic Republic of Iran provided subsidized training for women, especially housewives. The Nordic countries took a number of initiatives to attract more girls and women to ICT-related fields. Finland made increasing the share of women educated in ICT part of its national information society strategy; and Iceland developed a national plan to encourage leadership in girls and increase the number of women studying computer science. Norway set up an ICT recruiting project in 1997, involving campaigns with a focus on introducing girls to ICT, information, networking, different types of support and activities for interested female students and special quotas for girls.

604. Some countries reported that more girls were attending ICT-related classes. In Dominica, for example, a high percentage of girls attended computer classes outside the formal education system and a greater percentage of rural women, especially the young, took advantage of youth skills training outreach programmes. Jordan reported that women accounted for 32 per cent of all students studying computer science and 15 per cent of university students taking computer engineering.

605. Member States reported steps to improve access to ICT in education. Japan made information-related subjects and content compulsory in elementary and junior high schools. Bahrain launched a project to expand the use of ICT in education and provide ICT training to all students. Singapore committed $2 billion from 1997 to 2002 to create an information technology-based teaching and learning environment in every school. More women were taking up science and computing classes in universities: at Nanyang Technological University, in Singapore, women made up 75 per cent of those taking communications studies.

606. Member States drew attention to the potential of ICT to improve access to education through distance learning and e-learning. For example, Seychelles used ICT to expand and improve adult learning and distance education. In a programme in the United States, professional women mentored girls between the ages of 13 and 18 in science, engineering and technology through a listserv and web site in 10 regional offices.

607. Countries, including Kenya, reported that women were increasingly using ICT to access and disseminate information for their business and economic activities, including farming, trade and entrepreneurship. Nepal provided ICT training to the women entrepreneurs' association to develop its capacity to compete in the global market. Cyprus provided special grants for women starting their own companies and encouraged them to use new technologies in the production and marketing of their products and services.

608. A number of countries reported using ICT to facilitate women's access to labour markets. Initiatives included training in new technology for unemployed women in Greece; the installation of electronic commercial centres and the development of computer technology to benefit women, particularly women artisans, in Morocco; and specialized ICT training for rural women in Uruguay. In Uzbekistan, a special ICT training centre for women was set up at Tashkent University.

609. Belgium and Germany developed specific projects to promote the employment of women in the ICT sector. The Republic of Korea assisted women entrepreneurs

starting their own e-businesses or who were in fields such as programming and multimedia content development. It also sponsored workshops to train women in the latest information and communications technology. Of 63,218 trained by the end of 2002, 3,517 had found work in the industry.

610. Mobile phones have been valuable for women who do not have fixed work locations. In Kenya, for example, between 2001 and 2004, the number of mobile phones, many of which are used by women, increased from 15,000 to 1,068,000.

611. Member States recognized the value of ICT in information and experience-sharing at international, regional and national levels. Azerbaijan, for example, established a number of programmes to support women's NGOs, including the Azerbaijan gender information centre and national women's portal and training sessions for women's organizations on ICT and web design.

612. Some countries applied ICT to strengthen the democratic process: the Netherlands, for example, set up a web site and online discussions to collect recommendations from citizens and social organizations on policy issues. Bahrain signed an e-governance agreement with IBM in March 2004. Some countries set up ICT programmes to build capacity among elected women officials, for example women members of parliament in the United Republic of Tanzania.

613. Many Member States reported using ICT to collect and disseminate information on gender-related issues, including health, employment, education and violence against women. In Belgium, a telephone hotline called the "green number" allowed victims of violence to seek help. The Islamic Republic of Iran launched a web site containing a women's digital library and statistics on women. Chile installed a "citizen's portal" with information on women's rights, benefits and opportunities. Many of these initiatives were supplemented by leaflets, radio programmes and other forms of publicity.

614. The European Union's eEurope 2005 Action Plan, which seeks to bring every citizen into the digital age, contains a number of recommendations supporting women's equal participation at all levels of the information society. The European Parliament's resolution on the Action Plan urges Member States to redress the existing gender divide in ICT-education and advocates the integration of women in ICT research and management.

615. Recent reports and studies show that women are underrepresented in the private sector and government structures that control ICT and, as a result, have little policy influence over its development and provision. Singapore, however, appointed a woman as the first CEO of the Infocomm Development Authority in 1999; the current head is also a woman. Other Member States responses did not include any information on gender balance in ICT decision-making.

616. In its resolution 57/176 on trafficking in women and girls, the General Assembly expressed deep concern about the use of new information technologies, including the Internet, for prostitution, sexual exploitation of children, trafficking in women as brides and sex tourism. A few Member States drew attention to actions taken to combat these harmful aspects of ICT. Norway, for example, presented a plan to protect children and adolescents from being exploited by child pornography and to prevent the sale of the sexual services of minors through electronic channels. Some Member States have taken legal measures to combat negative use of ICT. India made online pornography a punishable offence. The Philippines strengthened

the law against mail-order brides to prevent its circumvention using ICT. At the same time, ICT was being effectively used in the global efforts to end trafficking of women and girls: for example, anti-trafficking activists set up web sites to warn women about sexual slavery.

3. Obstacles and challenges

617. Lack of infrastructure and the high cost of access in developing countries present enormous challenges. Several countries from the African region drew attention to these shortcomings. They also drew attention to related challenges that seriously constrain women's access to information technology: high illiteracy rates/low educational levels among women and girls; lack of skills training; and the problem of content presented in unfamiliar languages. They stressed the need for practical measures, including providing ICT in locations that women can easily access.

618. The digital divide between urban and rural areas is of particular concern. Many rural areas in developing countries lack electricity, and even access to radios is limited. Rural women and girls generally have less access than men to information and new technologies. Research in Ireland concluded that the digital divide is inseparable from broader forms of social inequality: there is a strong correlation between social class, income, age, economic status and education and ICT uptake.

619. Member States from all regions reported that the low enrolment of girls and women in scientific and technological studies was one of the main obstacles to higher-level employment in information technology. Some countries, for example Norway, reported signs of a fall in the proportion of women and girls among ICT students. In general, illiteracy, low enrolment in school and high drop-out rates bar women and girls from all kinds of information, not merely ICT.

620. Governments were concerned that patterns of gender inequality are being reproduced in the information economy. Some noted the need to extend and deepen the reach of ICT beyond the educated middle class. Some countries also mentioned that the preparedness for e-commerce still is very low.

4. Conclusions

621. **There is a need to further develop the understanding of the gender dimensions of access to and use of ICT, and how ICT can be used as a tool for the promotion of gender equality. The development of reliable indicators and statistics disaggregated by sex, age and residence is crucial, and such disaggregation should be used in national surveys.**

622. **The second phase of WSIS, to be held in Tunis in 2005, will be an important opportunity to further strengthen the framework of gender equality for the information society. When developing recommendations and actions, a dual strategy of gender mainstreaming in ICT-related policies and programmes and targeted interventions for women and girls will be needed, as laid out in the Platform for Action.**

623. **Accessibility and cost are two of the most serious challenges to women's use of ICT. Countries and stakeholders should consider the ways that policies and projects allocate ICT-related resources. Universal access policies, resources for training and capacity-building for women in the use of ICT and the use of**

funds for projects targeted to women and girls deserve particular attention. E-governance policies must address the gender gaps in access to government services and political processes, especially for women living in rural or remote areas or who are otherwise marginalized. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are needed to ensure implementation of gender-sensitive policies and regulations in this field.

624. **In many countries access to information technology for women in rural areas depends on extending common-use facilities, such as telecentres, phone shops and other means of public access in places convenient and accessible to women. The importance of local languages and the use of existing ICT such as radio should also be noted. Gender gaps in ICT will deepen unless women gain increased access to education and training in ICT related fields. Low literacy prevents women from entering jobs associated with information technology, as well as from using it. Women need more capacity-building initiatives and women's NGOs and civil society organizations need resources to support their efforts for advocacy and political empowerment through the use of ICT. Governments, in collaboration with all stakeholders, must urgently address the negative use of ICT and the ways in which it contributes to the sexual exploitation of women and children.**

E. Millennium Development Goals

1. Introduction

625. The Millennium Declaration recognizes equality as a fundamental value. In adopting the declaration, Member States resolved to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease, to stimulate development that is truly sustainable,[87] to combat all forms of violence against women and to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

626. Goal 3 of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[88] is to promote gender equality and empower women. Achievement of this goal is essential for the achievement of all other MDGs. Conversely, achieving the MDGs has implications for gender equality and empowerment of women. The critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session are relevant to most of the 16 MDG targets and 48 indicators.

627. Goal 3 calls for elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. The four indicators associated with Goal 3 concern the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; the ratio of literate women to men ages 15 to 24 years old; the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration[89] noted that while there had been progress in gender equality in education, progress towards other indicators under Goal 3 was lagging behind.

628. National MDG monitoring and reporting enable Governments and other stakeholders to review progress and challenges in achieving gender equality across all MDGs, as well as in relation to Goal 3. This section reviews the linkages

between the implementation of MDGs and implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session. It focuses on linkages at policy, programme and institutional levels.

629. The majority of responses from Governments, 91 in total, addressed the Millennium Declaration or MDGs. Many Governments reported on achievements in policies, programmes and institutional frameworks relating to MDG implementation, while fewer reported on challenges and future actions. Assessments of progress and gaps did not always address gender perspectives. Many Governments noted their commitment to the Millennium Declaration and MDGs, but fewer addressed mainstreaming of gender perspectives into MDGs. They did not always address the gender perspectives of all MDGs and their relevance to the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome document.

630. Most responses focused on Goal 1 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger); Goal 3 (Promote gender equality and empower women); Goal 4 (Reduce child mortality) and Goal 5 (Improve maternal health). In relation to Goal 3, responses were linked to indicators on education and health. Fewer Governments addressed the political participation of women or their share of non-agricultural employment. A number of countries referred to Goal 6 (Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases). Goal 8 (Develop a global partnership for development) was mentioned mainly by donor countries. Few Governments provided specific information on the gender perspectives of Goal 7 on sustainable development.

631. Some Governments linked the implementation of the Millennium Declaration to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Five of the 74 States Parties to the Convention whose reports were considered by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women between January 2001 and July 2004 mentioned the Declaration or MDGs in reports or during oral presentations.[90]

2. Achievements

632. Some countries have national mechanisms responsible for monitoring and implementation of MDGs. Some of these bodies were also mandated to take into account the implementation of the Platform for Action, such as the new Presidential Commission for Social Affairs in El Salvador. Other bodies initially responsible for the implementation of the Platform for Action have taken on additional responsibilities to ensure linkages between the two processes. Argentina's ad hoc commission on the Beijing Platform for Action prepared a new phase of activities to take into account MDGs. Fiji reconstituted the Ministry of Women at the same level as other government departments dealing with social and poverty issues.[91]

633. Many Governments noted that MDG-related processes had been organized with involvement of the national women's machinery, women's groups and civil society. In Argentina and Namibia, the national machineries had participated in the MDG reporting process. In Egypt, the National Council for Women developed a gender-sensitive strategy at a national conference on MDGs. In Croatia and Uruguay, academia and civil society joined consultations to develop national targets and indicators for Goal 3. Several Governments included women's organizations in developing their poverty reduction strategy papers. In Cameroon, these processes reportedly involved around 30 per cent of all women.

634. Several countries reported new gender policies and national plans of action or revision of existing policies, reflecting all or some MDGs. Analysis of linkages between the Platform for Action and MDGs led to changes in national gender policies in some countries. In other countries specific attention was given to gender perspectives in individual MDGs. In Malaysia, the new gender policy integrated both MDGs and other issues addressed by the Millennium Declaration, such as globalization and ICT. As part of efforts to link the Platform for Action with MDGs, the United Republic of Tanzania added several issues to its subprogramme for women and gender equality. New national gender policies of Burkina Faso and Cameroon reflect a focus on women's education and training.

635. Some responses indicated coordination between gender policies, overall national development frameworks and other policy instruments addressing MDGs. Kyrgyzstan's national action plan on gender equality integrated MDGs and was coordinated with the national development framework. Mexico's new gender policy followed the guidelines of the national development policy on integration of MDGs.

636. Several countries considered MDGs as a framework for national development policies. A number recognized gender perspectives as an integral part of national development policies and programmes. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework in Eritrea was in line with the MDGs and incorporated gender perspectives. In discussions of MDGs, a few countries expressly noted their commitment to the Platform for Action or specific linkages with the Platform. National MDG reports in Liberia and Ukraine included references to the Beijing Platform for Action or gender equality.

637. A considerable number of countries prepared poverty reduction policies and frameworks, including poverty reduction strategy papers, to address Goal 1 as an overarching national objective. Several integrated gender perspectives. Viet Nam's poverty reduction strategy papers drew on the national strategy for the advancement of women. The central goal of the strategy of Honduras was to raise the female human development index by 20 per cent by eliminating any form of discrimination against women. In other countries, poverty reduction strategy papers focused on selected MDGs, mainly Goals 3, 4 and 5, or prioritized Goal 3.

638. Many Governments integrated MDGs into social policies, programmes or legislation, mainly in education and health. The new Social Development Act in Guatemala targeted the entire social sector. Many countries addressed maternal health and child mortality in accordance with Goals 4 and 5, including Dominica in its health plan for 2002-2006 and Azerbaijan in the national programme for reproductive health and family planning. A number of Governments, especially in Africa and countries with economies in transition of Central and Eastern Europe, addressed Goal 6: for example, Kenya's HIV/AIDS strategic plan (2000-2005), which included gender-specific targets. A few countries, including Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg and Switzerland, emphasized the links between women and sustainable development in programmes incorporating Goal 7.

639. Most major donor countries considered MDGs an overall framework for their development cooperation and many integrated them into their policies. Norway focused on the education of women and girls, but emphasized the need to take gender perspectives into account in all MDG-related programmes. New Zealand noted, with specific reference to Goal 8, that 54 per cent of its development assistance integrated gender perspectives. In Andorra, the Inter-Ministerial

Commission for International Cooperation has given priority to contributions to projects that ensure follow-up to MDGs, incorporate gender, children's and human rights perspectives and ensure that 21 per cent of international cooperation projects are aimed at the promotion of the education of women and girls.

640. Some responses referred to partnerships for the implementation of MDGs. The United Kingdom supported Pakistan in developing its poverty monitoring framework, for example, by an evaluation of a rural women's health-care information programme. Germany included combating trafficking in women from developing countries as part of a poverty reduction action programme.

641. Some Governments improved the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data to monitor MDGs. Barbados and Dominica established new social indicators committees to ensure collaboration between data producers and users. Kenya's Central Bureau of Statistics already uses sex-disaggregated data in its major surveys and developed some indicators for MDGs. Uruguay's National Statistics Institute and Mauritania's statistics service produced some gender statistics and made greater use of some gender indicators.

642. Several countries reported having fully or partially achieved some or all MDG targets and indicators. Azerbaijan noted the reduction of poverty and progress in reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention, education, land ownership and women's entrepreneurship. Several countries reported progress towards Goal 3 education indicators. Several countries reported improvements in maternal health and declines in child mortality. Fewer responses reported on progress relating to women's participation in national parliaments and in non-agricultural employment. Guinea indicated an increased representation of women in parliament. In Zimbabwe, the target for women in parliament and senior civil service positions was set at 50 per cent by 2015.

3. Obstacles and challenges

643. Some countries noted that national development policies, programmes and legislation took insufficient account of MDGs and of gender perspectives as an integral part of the Goals. Other countries noted the lack of overall coordination in implementation. Nicaragua mentioned the need for policies and actions to ensure gender equality in the MDG context. Mauritania noted that the gender dimension was not integrated into follow-up and evaluation of national MDG implementation, although some of the indicators related to women.

644. A number of countries, including Bulgaria, the Central African Republic, Jordan and Paraguay, pointed to challenges in implementation and stressed that inequalities between women and men persisted despite stated national commitment to MDGs and their integration into policy frameworks. Several countries considered that lack of human, institutional and financial capacity and resources were serious obstacles to implementing MDGs. Despite some progress, the continuing lack of sex-disaggregated statistics remained an obstacle to policy-making and monitoring. Ireland noted the need for information management tools to assess the costs and benefits of funding for gender equality. Zambia was concerned that limited funding had negative implications for the provision of free basic education and might lead to a failure to implement Goal 2.

645. A few responses suggested the need to adapt targets and indicators more effectively to national or regional contexts. Nepal expressed concern that targets were set without consideration of the objectives of the Platform for Action and national action plans, resulting in the exclusion of important issues such as control over productive resources and equality before the law. Nepal also pointed to the need to address maternal health from a more holistic viewpoint under Goal 5, and to take gender perspectives into account in the target for Goal 6.

646. Several countries noted that apparent progress on some indicators did not necessarily indicate improvement in the overall situation of women. For example in the Congo, although the enrolment of girls and boys was almost equal, overall enrolment of girls had actually declined as a result of the continuing conflict. In Qatar, progress had been made on some of the indicators for Goal 3, but women had limited access to tertiary education and, as a result, limited employment opportunities.

647. Some countries were concerned about the unequal participation of women in decision-making, including in bodies dealing with MDG implementation. Nepal noted that only one member of the national poverty alleviation committee was a woman and that the committee risked addressing the feminization of poverty from a welfare rather than a rights-based perspective.

648. A number of countries considered that insensitivity to gender issues and continuing stereotypes hampered progress. Despite overall national commitment to MDGs, the Central African Republic noted that the patriarchal system and the distribution of roles between the sexes perpetuated inequalities. Bias against women's employment choices was noted in Azerbaijan and bias against working with the national women's machinery was reported in Mexico.

649. A number of countries reported specific obstacles in implementation of the Platform for Action and MDGs, including poverty and conflict, which affected women in particular. In the Central African Republic, all core indicators had deteriorated. Liberia considered that MDGs would not be achieved without security and the rule of law. A number of countries were concerned that they would miss targets for maternal health and child mortality. Many countries reported making progress in some education indicators but noted continuing obstacles with regard to other indicators under Goal 3. In Armenia, although the overall enrolment was stable, school drop-out rates had increased among vulnerable groups such as indigenous and rural women. Women still faced gender wage gaps in Thailand and in Azerbaijan, particularly in sectors which employed large numbers of women.

4. Conclusions

650. While some Governments recognized that they should use the MDG framework to implement the Platform for Action and the outcome document, little concrete information was provided on how this was being done. Further emphasis needs to be placed on linking the implementation of the Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs. Although there is increasing understanding of the importance of a rights-based approach in the implementation of the MDGs, recognition of the linkages between the MDGs and CEDAW is limited.

651. **The full integration of gender perspectives into the MDG process has been hampered by a lack of capacity, data and resources.**

652. **Lack of collaboration and coordination between institutions involved in the implementation of the MDGs remains a major constraint. The role of national machineries in implementation of the MDGs should be explicitly defined. Lack of consultation with and participation of women's groups and networks should also be specifically addressed.**

F. Men and boys

1. Introduction

653. The Beijing Declaration called upon men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasized the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities, as well as the principle of equality of women and men as integral to the socialization process. It stressed that gender equality could only be achieved when men and women worked together in partnerships. Specific recommendations focused on encouraging men to share equally in childcare and household work and promoting programmes to educate and enable men to assume their responsibilities to prevent HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

654. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session identified a number of obstacles to the implementation of the Platform for Action. These included persistent gender stereotyping, which had led to insufficient encouragement for men to reconcile professional and family responsibilities, and insufficient sharing of tasks and responsibilities by men for caregiving within families, households and communities; unequal power relationships between women and men, in which women often did not have the power to insist on safe and responsible sex practices; and lack of communication and understanding between men and women on women's health needs.

655. The agreed conclusions on the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality, adopted at the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, identified men's crucial role in: sharing family responsibilities; preventing violence against women, including trafficking, and HIV/AIDS transmission; providing role models for younger men; as well as in efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into policies and programmes. A large number of recommendations were directed towards enabling men's involvement in efforts towards gender equality, including by building capacity and raising awareness of gender equality and the advancement of women. In this regard, it was important to identify contexts in which a large number of men could be reached, such as in male-dominated institutions, industries and associations. Other recommendations focused on generating sociocultural change towards gender equality, including through the upbringing and educational process.

2. Achievements

656. Demonstrating increased interest in involving men and boys in achieving gender equality, 38 States reported (albeit briefly) on initiatives and challenges in

involving men and boys in the promotion of gender equality. Several countries reported on public campaigns and a general increased public opinion on this theme. For example, Lithuania reported that more and more men and boys express active interest in issues of gender equality. Malawi reported that a critical mass of interest developed after an awareness campaign. A "Men for gender equality" network was formed with over 200 members and a national conference was held in November 2003. Gender sensitization campaigns have been run by the Government of Mauritius, including one on "Men as Partners".

657. The most reported theme was involving men to end violence against women. An example is Thailand's efforts on the project "Male Responsibility in Protecting Children against Abuses and Violence", which encourages behavioural changes among men with regard to violence and sexual abuse of children and women. Thailand also implemented a campaign against sexual violence called the "White Ribbon Campaign". Nine male celebrities were selected to raise awareness about men's involvement in the elimination of violence against women. Mexico reported on research at the State level, including the publication of a book entitled "Violence Among Men: An Anthropological Study of Male Violence".

658. Other efforts centred on the role of men as fathers. Malawi implemented various programmes that involved men and boys in parenting and fatherhood programmes, including a peer groups programme, which focused on the well-being of adolescent as well as the role of men and boys in family development. In Singapore, the Centre for Fathering works with individuals, corporations and community groups to create public awareness, equip fathers with parenting skills through fathering seminars and emphasize the importance of strong marriages in providing nurturing environment for children. In Slovakia, a number of seminars organized by NGOs and research institutions highlighted a new approach to paternity stemming from the conviction that the presence of the father in rearing children brings a better quality of life for both children and fathers.

659. Other initiatives looked more generally at the division of work within households. In the Netherlands, the project "Men taking the Lead" aims to make the role divisions between men and women a topic for open discussion to promote a more even division of tasks and responsibilities and for a more equal representation of men and women in paid and unpaid work, in all areas, including within companies, in sport clubs and in schools. Viet Nam carried out a public education campaign entitled "If you share housework with women, happiness will be doubled".

660. In El Salvador, efforts to encourage men and boys to participate in the promotion of gender equality have centred on education. A gender focus has been included in the curriculum for the first 12 years of schooling in order to break down sexist values, attitudes and practices that work to the detriment of Salvadoran women.

661. A number of countries have extended parental leave schemes to provide better opportunities for both women and men to reconcile work and family responsibilities. This includes shared leave for mothers and fathers; separate leave for fathers; extension of total leave period if the father participates; and flexible arrangements in the use of parental leave. In Norway, 85 to 90 per cent of eligible fathers used their paid paternity leave since it was introduced by law in 1993.

662. Men's involvement in reproductive health was raised by a few countries. Increased male participation in protecting women's reproductive health was reported by the Islamic Republic of Iran, while Seychelles reported changing attitudes of men toward family planning. Attention to men's roles in reversing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, including through publications was mentioned by Swaziland.

663. A few Governments have funded specific initiatives. Since 2001, the Norwegian Government has funded a resource centre for men, REFORM, to mobilize men's resources and to assist individual men in tackling crises related to masculinity, fatherhood, stress in the workplace, divorce, sexuality, anger and violence. REFORM offers confidential telephone conversations with advice and support, personal conversations with professional male counsellors, men's groups, legal advice, seminars, projects regarding men's life and web sites.

3. Obstacles and challenges

664. countries reporting initiatives in this area stressed, however, that these were just initial steps and pointed to difficulties in engaging men in the promotion of gender equality. Problems persisted in mobilizing men relating to gender-based violence. Thailand attributed this to "traditional beliefs concerning sexual values, roles and relationships among family members".

665. The reconciliation of private and professional work, including increasing the number of men taking parental leave remained an important challenge in Croatia. A majority of men and women in Finland thought that men should increase their participation in the care and raising of children. Liechtenstein reported that in order to achieve a redistribution of paid and unpaid work, men had to be motivated to become more involved in work in the family.

666. Several countries highlighted the challenge of involving men in reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

667. Sex-stereotypical attitudes and perceptions in the society, especially of men, persisted. There was a need to develop more knowledge and critical understanding of men and their role in promoting gender equality.

4. Conclusions

668. **Working with men and boys on gender equality is still in its early stages. Progress has been made with general awareness campaigns, paternity leave programmes and discussions on men's role in ending gender-based violence.**

669. **Making progress on gender equality involves not only changing laws and implementing programmes, it also involves changing attitudes and deeply engrained behaviours. Member States signalled the importance of the educational system and the media in changing gender stereotypes and images. Partnerships with NGOs, the private sector and leaders from all segments of the population, including religious leaders, are also important. Exchange of experiences, good practices and research are required. There is much to be learned. Although country and context-specific actions are essential, significant gains can be made through sharing experiences and good practices across regions.**

Part Four
Institutional arrangements and mechanisms for the advancement of women

I. Introduction

670. The critical area of concern on national mechanisms and institutions contains three strategic objectives: the creation or strengthening of national machineries and other governmental bodies; the integration of gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects; and the generation and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data and information.

671. In the Platform for Action, the main task of national machineries was to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender equality perspective in all policy areas. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-third session, recognized that the effectiveness and sustainability of national machineries depended on the extent to which they were embedded in the national context; the political and socio-economic system in which they operated; and how far they were accountable to women, including those with the least access to resources.

672. The Platform for Action noted the need for budgetary resources for national machineries, a point which was further reinforced at the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session (General Assembly resolution S-23/3) noted a nearly universal shortage of financial and human resources for national machineries.

673. In the Platform for Action, Governments endorsed gender mainstreaming as a major global strategy for the promotion of equality between women and men, together with specific targeted interventions to address women's empowerment and gender equality. At its twenty-third special session, the General Assembly reinforced the gender mainstreaming mandate.

674. Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 defined gender mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels, as well as a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. In July 2004, the Economic and Social Council, in reviewing the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system, adopted resolution 2004/4, which calls for the establishment of action plans with timelines to address the gap between policy and practice, with a view to strengthening commitment at the highest levels.

675. The third strategic objective of institutional mechanisms is the generation and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex. In the outcome document of the twenty-third special session, the General Assembly requested Member States to provide national statistical offices with institutional and financial support for this purpose, especially where information is particularly lacking.

676. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women considered the question of statistical information to monitor the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. Having observed that many national reports did not provide statistics, the Committee recommended that States parties ensure that national statistical services collect sex-disaggregated data.[92] The Committee continues to pay attention to this issue.

677. Adoption of the Millennium Declaration, MDGs and other internationally-agreed development goals reinforced the importance of gender-sensitive indicators and data disaggregated by sex. Sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators are required for all goals and targets in the Millennium Declaration and MDGs.

678. The Statistical Commission discusses gender statistics under demographic and social statistics. In 1995, at its twenty-eighth session, the Commission agreed that the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination should consider preparing a list of gender-related topics that might be covered in national publications on a rotating annual basis. The Commission emphasized the value of time-use statistics, including gender statistics, and requested the Statistical Division to prepare a draft classification of time-use activities as a basis for further research and special studies.

679. At its forty-sixth session in 2003, the Commission on the Status of Women, in collaboration with the Statistical Commission, held a high-level round table on gaps and challenges in measuring progress in the context of the 2005 review and appraisal.

680. The Platform for Action mandated institutions to build the capacities of women and girls through training. Governments agreed to take action to increase training with a view to income generation. At the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Governments were urged to promote capacity-building, including gender training for both women and men in government ministries.

681. The Platform for Action called for civil society participation in close collaboration with Governments. At the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Governments were urged to coordinate or consult with NGOs. The outcome document of the twenty-third special session also highlighted the importance of civil society for the sustainability and legitimacy of national machineries.

II. Achievements

1. National mechanisms

682. In many countries national machineries made significant advances in the last decade. There is a greater understanding of effective structures, strategies, methodologies and tools in national machineries and a growing body of good practice.

683. Very few countries reported not having a national machinery. After 1995, several countries created national machineries for the first time. Other countries strengthened existing machineries and broadened their mandate, including upgraded status; increased budget and staff; enhanced authority; increased responsibility;

vertical extension into municipal, district, regional and provincial government structures; horizontal extension in various ministries and agencies; and improved intra-governmental coordination.

684. To raise the status of the national machinery, some countries upgraded the machinery to a full-fledged ministry or sub-ministry. A number of countries, such as Armenia, Denmark and France, created posts of deputy or full ministers in charge of women or gender equality. Some countries upgraded the machinery by moving it to a more central or powerful office, such as the President's Office in Brazil and Kyrgyzstan, or to the Prime Minister's Office in Djibouti and Ethiopia. Some countries made the machinery autonomous so that it could independently assess the performance of the Government.

685. A significant number of countries established focal points for women or gender equality in government offices, including not only development-oriented departments and agencies relating to agriculture, education and health, but also law, finance, security, justice, interior, police, prisons, foreign affairs and trade. The United States, for example, established offices for women and gender issues in numerous offices and departments, including the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Labor, the Veterans Administration, the Department of Defense, the State Department and in the field of foreign aid. Viet Nam reported establishing gender focal points in 45 ministries or agencies in 61 of 64 provinces. Several Member States, including Armenia and Greece, created an inter-agency commission or coordinating committee. Bolivia and France established coordination through agreements and letters of intention among line ministries, local government, the private sector and NGOs. Responses indicated that the mandates, access to decision-making processes, support from management levels and resource allocations to these mechanisms vary considerably across countries.

686. There has been an increase in the number of special offices and focal points addressing women and gender equality in municipal, district and provincial governments. Several countries reported women or gender offices in municipalities or district offices. Costa Rica created municipal commissions on the status of women as well as a national network of municipal women's offices. Several Member States reported special machineries at the provincial or state level.

687. Over the past decade, a number of other mechanisms, varying in composition and mandate, have been created to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Many countries have established equal employment opportunity offices, including Austria, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic. Several countries have set up special advisory groups or committees and caucuses in parliament to address gender equality issues and equal opportunities for women. A number of countries have appointed ombudspersons to monitor progress on gender equality. The ombudsperson's office in Egypt, for example, has a broad role, including receiving and investigating complaints from women with regard to discrimination at workplaces, personal status, law, domestic violence and inheritance.

688. Several countries enacted broad-based gender equality legislation, which mandates all government agencies to pursue policies and measures to achieve gender equality. These laws enabled ombudspersons to monitor progress towards gender equality and investigate violations. Many countries adopted national gender equality policies and national action plans.

689. A number of countries, including Colombia, Costa Rica and Egypt, included gender equality concerns in their five-year or annual development plans. National machineries encouraged sectoral ministries and agencies to address gender concerns, with the critical support of gender focal points in ministries and agencies.

690. Countries became increasingly aware of the importance of resources for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. Since 2000, a growing number have developed a gender-sensitive approach to budgetary allocations. The National Assembly in the Republic of Korea adopted a resolution on gender-sensitive budget allocations. Several countries reported on initiatives and pilot projects in collaboration with NGOs and civil society organizations. Most of these initiatives include training. Botswana held workshops on gender-responsive budgeting for senior government officials and members of parliament and Malaysia held workshops for officials from four pilot ministries. Some countries reported the development of tools to support these initiatives. The United Republic of Tanzania issued sectoral budget guidelines and a checklist on mainstreaming gender perspectives in budgets to make sure that the budgetary processes of its ministries incorporated gender concerns.

691. Some countries reported that national machineries facilitated and collaborated in efforts to improve gender statistics. Thailand's national machinery developed a database; established and strengthened women's information networks; disseminated information on the Internet; and updated and reported on indicators annually. The National Institute of Women in Costa Rica partnered with the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses and public universities in a pilot study to measure the use of time and calculate accounting values for the work done by women in the home. Countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) identified critical areas of concern for development of gender indicators. CARICOM strengthened Dominica's existing process for collecting sex-disaggregated health data.

2. Gender mainstreaming

692. Many countries developed specific policies and action plans on gender mainstreaming, some with timelines and targets and provisions for follow-up and evaluation. For example, the aim of the strategy of the Netherlands is to ensure top-level commitment within departments; develop clear targets for gender equality; determine responsibility for gender mainstreaming; foster gender expertise; and provide human and financial resources. Denmark included clear targets, frameworks and timetables in its five-year action plan for gender mainstreaming.

693. Several countries developed gender mainstreaming policies and action plans for different sector areas such as science and technology, poverty reduction, education, agriculture, employment, environment and health. A number of countries incorporated gender perspectives in development cooperation policies and strategies. The Department for International Development in the United Kingdom appointed a Senior Gender and Rights Adviser in January 2004 for this purpose.

694. Several Governments reported that the gender mainstreaming strategy has a clear national mandate. Finland, for example incorporated the Act on Equality into the current government programme, which states that gender mainstreaming must be integrated into the entire administration of the State. Indonesia issued a presidential

instruction that all government agencies at the national and subnational levels integrate gender perspectives into their work.

695. A number of countries set up inter-ministerial working groups or committees to improve coordination. Austria's working group, for example, includes all ministries as well as the constitutional court, administrative court, court of the audit and parliamentary administration. The working group has a web site intended to promote networking among bodies involved. Other mechanisms include the Netherlands' expertise centre for gender and ethnicity, E-Quality, which supported the process of gender mainstreaming with expertise, theme-studies, instruments and the distribution of good practices. Kenya's national commission on gender and development played a key role in coordinating and facilitating gender mainstreaming in national development.

696. Some countries discussed the need for tools to ensure gender mainstreaming in all policy areas. Australia, for example, announced development and testing of a gender impact assessment tool based on international best practice, with a view to extending gender analysis in all policy-making activities throughout the Government. Gender impact assessment methodology has also been introduced in Japan and New Zealand. A number of other countries also reported gender impact assessment tools and studies in different sectors, such as health, environment, education and agriculture. The United Kingdom reported that a gender impact assessment handbook had been prepared in Northern Ireland to assist departments to develop action plans and address gender inequalities within their areas of responsibility. A broad range of other tools such as guidelines, checklists, handbooks and manuals have also been developed across all regions to enhance gender mainstreaming efforts.

697. Responses from countries in all regions included information on capacity-building workshops, training programmes, round-table discussions and conferences on gender mainstreaming, which not only cover why gender perspectives are important, but provide information on implementation of gender mainstreaming in practice. Barbados, for example, is implementing a training programme for gender focal points in governmental ministries and departments.

3. Statistics and indicators

698. A number of Governments provided examples of efforts to improve data collection and develop gender-specific indicators. These include mechanisms to develop and collect gender-specific information; publication of sex-disaggregated data; and development of tools and guidelines for working with gender statistics. Sweden, for example, has produced a manual for civil servants on gender-classified statistics. Norway's "gender equality barometer" measures gender representation and access to resources over a broad spectrum of society and gives examples of good practice.

699. Some countries were successful in collecting data disaggregated by sex through national censuses and surveys in some of the critical areas of concern, including, inter alia: education; health; violence against women; the economy; and political participation. In Kenya, the Central Bureau of Statistics included data on women's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) in the national accounts. Most data on employment, including wage employment, was collected and analysed in a disaggregated manner. The Government also produced monographs on gender

dimensions of education and housing. Data disaggregated by sex on HIV/AIDS was collected and analysed from a gender perspective.

700. A number of countries reported that they had developed gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Ethiopia produced statistics and indicators for the education system, disaggregated by sex at all levels. In Finland, public authorities gathered and published data disaggregated by sex on political indicators at all levels of participation, for example: voter turn-out; candidacies; representatives; committees; and indirectly elected organs. In El Salvador, household surveys assisted in the development of highly specific indicators of women's progress. Gender-sensitive indicators were also developed within the framework of MDGs. Barbados set up an MDG committee to monitor social indicators and to promote collaboration between data producers and users.

701. Some countries created databases with data disaggregated by sex to monitor and evaluate progress in areas such as violence against women, health and the labour market. Malaysia, for example, developed a prototype sex-disaggregated database information system, which will be expanded in cooperation with line ministries and the Department of Statistics. Egypt created a strong database for the generation, dissemination and updating of gender statistics and indicators. A number of countries prepared statistical publications, including reference books and reports that have helped formulate State social policy, annual publications, training manuals on gender statistics, and statistical compendia. The United Kingdom review of gender statistics involved consultation with both users and producers of gender statistics and produced a full report and a brief guide to gender statistics. Azerbaijan published a statistical compendium on families, including gender-related statistics on the demographic characteristics of families, health care, employment, standard of living, household budgets and crime. In addition to special reports, Switzerland regularly updated its main gender equality indicators on the Internet and in the form of brochures for the public. The Federal Statistical Office works closely with the Federal Office for Gender Equality on these publications.

4. Capacity-building

702. Countries reported a variety of capacity-building activities on gender issues for government institutions, civil society, women's organizations and individual women. Target groups in the first category included government leaders, policy makers, civil servants, members of administration, ministerial staff, legislators and members of the judiciary. Financial assistance from donor communities facilitated the process.

703. Some countries set up special mechanisms or gender training resource groups to provide capacity-building on a systematic basis. Nepal set up a gender unit in the administrative staff college. Viet Nam established a group of resource gender trainers. Between 1999 and 2000, Malawi's new team of nearly 100 gender trainers trained 120 policy makers, 3,000 district assembly staff members, 150 media personnel, and 2,500 ministry of gender personnel. Malawi also trained a team of trainers in gender and HIV/AIDS.

704. A number of countries reported training programmes for specific sectors. India offered gender-sensitization training to law enforcement agencies, medical officers

and census enumerators. Malawi trained over 3,000 army officers in gender and development. Austria ran training programmes in each ministry followed by a quality assurance project. Latvia developed a training programme for civil servants on gender equality and held discussions about making the course a precondition for permanent status.

705. A number of countries reported gender training for people in the education sector. For instance, about 350 pre-school, elementary, and secondary teachers participated in a gender-sensitization programme in Greece. Luxembourg introduced "gender pedagogy" to implement a non-discriminatory education and training system. Cameroon trained more than 600 community leaders to help mobilize society in favour of sending girls to school.

706. Among many initiatives for women and women's organizations, several countries reported special training to encourage women to hold public office and participate in the political process, particularly at the local level. Qatar provided training for women on managing election campaigns.

707. Women in a few countries received general leadership training. Viet Nam trained 18,000 women in leadership skills. The Russian Federation held symposiums, conferences, courses and thematic round tables for women in government service and women's leadership.

708. Informal or personal training took the form of mentoring for women in municipal executives and training for women in politics. Following a workshop on lobbying for women parliamentarians, Mauritania and Seychelles established a national women's parliamentarians' association. Members were encouraged to become role models and mentors for young women aspiring to become involved in politics and decision-making. Many countries also reported providing training for women entrepreneurs.

5. Resources

709. Countries reported that limited financial resources were a prime obstacle to effective functioning of institutional mechanisms, though a few reported increased resource allocation for national machineries. Several countries noted an increase in budget allocations for targeted initiatives for women and girls and gender equality. Thailand reported that budget allocations for gender training and development of tools and guidelines had increased.

710. In a number of reports, including those from Ecuador, Kenya and Palestine, it was noted that line ministries had no dedicated budgets for gender mainstreaming. Several countries expressed concern that their national machinery depended on international support. Many countries acknowledged the importance of specialist technical resources, staff with recognized expertise in specific sectors, such as gender equality and the law or economic reform, both within the national machinery and within other sectoral ministries and institutions. A number of countries reported a shortage of qualified staff. Belize noted that the lack of human resources impeded its national machinery's ability to train focal points in other ministries and to provide follow-up.

6. Monitoring and accountability

711. A wide variety of monitoring and accountability mechanisms have been put in place. The most common form of monitoring and reporting is the production of regular reports, often annually, a significant number of which are submitted to the national legislature. Denmark produces an annual report for presentation to the Parliament. In Ukraine, the Ministry for Family, Children and Youth reports every year to the Cabinet of Ministers. The Government of Japan submits an annual report to the Diet describing progress towards a gender-equal society, action in the last year and proposals for the year to come.

712. Many Member States set up institutions or committees to monitor progress. In 2000, Spain created a monitoring unit to build an information system capable of accurately reflecting the situation of women and the effect of policies to promote women's equality. Poland set up a permanent team of experts to monitor the national action plan. The team, which includes NGO representatives, was to establish indicators on implementation of the plan and prepare a monitoring report by the end of 2004.

713. Several countries drew upon international and regional agreements and bodies to enhance their monitoring and reporting, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, MDGs and other international agreements for ensuring accountability. NGOs often prepare alternative or shadow reports outlining their assessment of governmental efforts.

7. Partnerships and outreach

714. Many countries, including Canada, Denmark, Jordan and Kyrgyzstan, specifically mentioned NGO involvement in public policy formulation and national strategy development. Action by women's NGOs have led countries to develop and adopt legislation on women's issues, including Bolivia, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Korea. El Salvador developed its national plan for the prevention of domestic violence through collaboration with NGOs. NGOs also helped implement national plans, as in Bulgaria, Denmark, Cuba, China, El Salvador and the United Kingdom. El Salvador's national policy on women called for coordination among official bodies, NGOs and civil society groups.

715. Consultative mechanisms between NGOs and national machineries include formal relationships in countries such as Germany, where NGOs are members of inter-ministerial working groups or part of the official delegation to the Commission on the Status of Women, or as in China, Cuba and Japan, where they are part of the national machinery. In Mexico, NGOs participate in the national mechanism for the advancement of women and on its board of directors. Several countries hold regular consultation meetings, round tables and open dialogue with NGOs.

716. Many Governments recognized the importance of NGO lobbying and advocacy, which has produced greater awareness of women and gender issues. NGOs promoted public awareness by establishing regional branches for outreach; assisting in gender training for experts and staff of governmental and non-governmental entities; providing advisory services; and launching media campaigns.

717. NGOs took up a wide variety of issues, in particular, the human rights of women; violence against women, including sexual offences, domestic violence and trafficking. Women's economic empowerment is another high priority for NGOs,

including entrepreneurship; credit schemes; income generation; employment training; and poverty reduction. NGOs offered skills training programmes and training in income-generating activities. NGOs in Bulgaria and the Syrian Arab Republic set up centres for women's entrepreneurship, and NGOs in Algeria and Chad provided credit to women.

718. Governments supported NGO capacity for implementation. Financial support was most often project-based, or in the form of annual grants. Much of the capacity-building support to NGOs came from international or regional initiatives, such as training for women in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Germany and the United States supported NGOs through dissemination of information and training workshops. Governmental organizations in a number of countries offered training and technical support to NGOs.

719. Many Member States reported partnerships with parliamentarians. Some countries established formal legislative committees to review and propose legislation for gender equality and women's empowerment. Women parliamentarians formed committees, caucuses and task forces, sometimes across party lines. In Poland, the parliamentary women's group included 58 deputies and 17 senators. Latvia established a special subcommittee to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming legislation. Equal opportunities commissions and human rights committees were mandated to review women's rights.

720. Several Member States reported linkages between national machineries and men's organizations, as well as discussions on gender issues from the perspective of men. The Netherlands launched a project to discuss the role divisions between men and women and create space for a more even division of tasks and responsibilities. Barbados supported the men's educational support association and promoted discussion on the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS. Jordan enlisted male parliamentarians as partners in the debate over the legal aspects of women's lives. However, at least one Member State reported that it was difficult to engage men and boys in discussions of gender equality.

721. Many Member States worked to raise public awareness about gender equality and women's empowerment and to generate support for national gender policies. Botswana, for example, commissioned a comprehensive advocacy and social mobilization strategy for its national gender programme. Bulgaria's campaign combated negative stereotypes and informed the public about international standards and standards of the European Union.

722. Many countries organized public information campaigns on specific issues, for example violence against aboriginal women in Canada, and a referendum on the introduction of paid maternity leave in Switzerland. Many countries issued publications about gender equality issues. The national machinery in Maldives, for example, published an annual magazine as well as bulletins and leaflets.

723. Several countries used the Internet as an information tool. Argentina, Austria and China reported that their national machineries operated web sites. Lebanon opened a women's information centre with a specialist library of documents on Arab women in general and Lebanese women in particular, and had an electronic database on work on and by women in the humanities, social science and literature. Nepal developed a database on women and children, which updates progress on the Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

III. Obstacles and challenges

724. Many obstacles and challenges in institutional arrangements remain the same as in 2000. A shortage of resources was cited most frequently. This included funding for national machineries, specialized resources in line ministries and research. Countries reported a huge gap between needs and resources. NGOs as well as Governments experienced resource constraints, although they received support from international and regional development agencies.

725. Despite gains made, Member States still find weak national machineries a challenge, noting: lack of staff; inadequate capacity; and marginalization of the special machinery and gender focal points. Attracting and keeping qualified staff was a problem for some countries. Many responses suggested that the concept of mainstreaming was still not well understood and that efforts are needed to highlight the advantages and contributions of the strategy to development. Switzerland reported that it remained a challenge to win the commitment of senior staff.

726. Several responses stated that gender equality was seen as peripheral or was pushed off the agenda by other urgent priorities. There is still a widespread assumption that gender equality and the promotion of gender mainstreaming are the exclusive responsibility of the national machineries and of gender focal points and units. Very often there is insufficient support for their work. The designated focal points may also have many other responsibilities.

727. Some countries found obstacles in lack of clear policies, weak mandates and poor guidelines. Some were held back by the absence of effective mechanisms for gender mainstreaming in general, and for assessing the responsibilities of central and local level agencies and decision makers in particular. Paraguay noted that it was particularly difficult to mainstream gender perspectives in economic policy and planning bodies.

728. Denmark cited lack of public awareness as an obstacle. For example, despite its important role, the public knew little about the work of the Gender Equality Board in Denmark.

729. Many responses noted the need for gender sensitization and capacity-building among those making, planning and implementing decisions in all sectors and at all levels. Several countries, including Uruguay, noted a lack of consistent commitment resulting from staff turnover or changes of government. Several Member States mentioned the need for continuous training and follow-up, and for improved coordination and collaboration.

730. Many countries noted challenges in monitoring, evaluation and accountability, especially in the absence of data disaggregated by sex and age. Kenya noted the need for monitoring and evaluation systems with good information and data.

731. Without access to good data, countries found it difficult to analyse the general situation of women and of vulnerable groups such as disabled women, rural women and indigenous women. Lack of sex-disaggregated data has held back development of policies and programmes, as well as monitoring and evaluation. Azerbaijan and the Syrian Arab Republic pointed out the need for systematic and reliable data on violence against women, especially domestic violence, but noted that victims were reluctant to report crimes of this nature. Panama noted that there was still insufficient sex-disaggregated data on rural women.

IV. Conclusions

732. Some Member States reported significant progress since 1995 in establishing and strengthening institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality and empowering women. National machineries had been expanded and restructured. Many now work closely with other government departments and line ministries, with broader mandates reflecting the growing adoption of gender mainstreaming strategies throughout government. Member States reported a variety of intra-governmental coordination mechanisms and the creation of numerous gender units and entities. Work on gender equality issues went beyond national to local, provincial or state level.

733. A major development over the past decade has been the number of new mechanisms developed to support gender equality at national level, which include parliamentary caucuses, gender equality commissions, ombudspersons offices, women's rights commissions and focal points in line ministries. Collaboration and coordination among these mechanisms can lead to increased attention to gender perspectives at national level.

734. Member States acknowledged, however, that there were many gaps and significant obstacles. National machineries face challenges in: incorporating gender equality into decentralization processes; providing high-quality expertise on policy development, capacity-building and programme implementation; and collaborating with NGOs, parliamentarians and other critical groups in building public support.

735. Over the past decade, understanding and commitment to gender mainstreaming increased significantly in many countries. Countries improved their national gender mainstreaming policy frameworks and put in place many mechanisms and tools. However, a significant gap between policy and practice remains in many countries. It is critical to develop deeper understanding of the goal of gender mainstreaming, how it can contribute to development and what the strategy entails in practical terms. Successful implementation requires: clear mandates for gender mainstreaming; action plans, including time-bound goals, and mechanisms for evaluation and monitoring; and securing accountability.

736. Although countries are increasingly aware of the importance of resource allocations and budgets at different levels to promote gender equality, many countries noted that national and international resources are still insufficient, perhaps reflecting the low priority of gender equality. Countries are increasingly using gender analysis of national budgets to ensure the flow of resources to promote gender equality. Despite a number of important steps, these efforts are not systematic and most initiatives are at an initial stage.

737. Inadequacies in development of statistics and indicators remain an important obstacle to gender-sensitive planning, monitoring and evaluation. Statistical systems need re-evaluation and upgrading. Data disaggregated by sex is critical to gender-sensitive budget allocation and planning, and is important to ensure full implementation of MDGs.

Part Five
Priority areas for future action

I. Overview

738. In their responses to the questionnaire many Governments identified priority areas for future action in relation to all critical areas of concern. Governments also gave considerable attention to the challenges and required action in relation to institutional development in support of gender equality and women's empowerment. A number of Governments saw the role of men and boys as critical for the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and elaborated plans for further work in this area.

A. Women and poverty

739. A number of countries reported their plans to develop a multisectoral approach to poverty reduction, establish national action plans and increase the involvement of social partners and NGOs. For example, Djibouti reported that it would incorporate gender perspectives in its poverty reduction strategy and Ireland has drawn up plans to reduce the social exclusion of women and increase their employment opportunities.

740. Other countries reported on plans to expand technical and vocational education and training, including in modern technology; increase microcredit facilities for women to encourage women to set up their own enterprises; and increase access to childcare services to facilitate women's involvement in the labour market. Lebanon intends to strengthen economic opportunities for poor women by facilitating their access to loans and other productive resources.

741. Many countries recognize the need for equal access to basic social services, including childcare and social safety nets. Sweden will develop measures to ensure increased gender equality within the social services. Luxembourg will analyse social security and taxation provisions from a gender perspective. A number of countries propose to address the issue of equal pay and reconciliation of family and work responsibilities.

742. Many countries specifically emphasized the importance of practical implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy for achieving gender-sensitive national policies and programmes for poverty eradication. Several countries intend to further develop gender analysis of poverty and regular collection of sex-disaggregated data. Some countries indicated that they would continue to develop gender-sensitive budget processes to facilitate poverty eradication.

743. Countries highlighted the need for poverty eradication policies and programmes to take into account the needs of different groups of women in poverty, acknowledging disparities and targeting specific groups of vulnerable women. Austria, Finland and Luxembourg will have special programmes for older women at risk of falling into poverty.

744. Countries intend to address rural women's need for equal access to and control of land and other productive resources, including credit and savings facilities and

education and training. Several countries, such as Brazil, Bolivia and Venezuela, will promote poverty eradication among indigenous women.

B. Education and training of women

745. Countries proposed a broad range of actions to eliminate gender discrimination in education, including diversifying education and vocational choices for boys and girls; extending financing for education; and increasing compulsory education. Some countries will focus on eradicating illiteracy among women, especially in rural areas. A number of countries intend to continue to focus on gender parity in retention as well as enrolment.

746. Other initiatives noted included removing elements in the curricula that discriminate against women and perpetuate gender stereotypes and providing professional training and workplace training to assist in the transition from school to work. Switzerland will increase the number of women in teaching, research and management.

747. Several countries intend to develop sex-disaggregated data to monitor enrolment rates in primary and secondary education. A number of countries, including Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Suriname, intend to strengthen education on gender equality in schools, including through training for teachers.

748. A number of countries see a need to increase the number of vocational training programmes for women to meet new market conditions. Several countries reported plans to increase qualitative and participatory research to analyse why more girls are not entering science and technology. Germany plans to increase the number of women trained in natural science and technical areas and to increase the proportion of women scientists. Countries will pay more attention to sensitizing employers, some of whom are reluctant to place women in traditionally male-oriented jobs, on gender issues. Oman plans to increase enrolment rates of women and girls in technical colleges and to enhance the quality of higher education at all levels. Sweden intends to increase the number of women in scientific and technical programmes to attract more girls into engineering. The Republic of Korea will place special emphasis on enhancing the status of women professors at higher institutions.

749. Several countries intend to increase expenditure on education, in particular, for girls from poor rural families. Guatemala intends to increase its budget for girls' education, with support from municipalities as well as urban and rural development councils.

C. Women and health

750. Countries indicated a variety of measures to address the remaining challenges on women's health. A number of countries intend to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the health sector. Honduras, Luxembourg, Mauritius and Uruguay will develop national health plans incorporating gender perspectives and undertake a gender analysis of health systems.

751. Some countries will give priority to improving overall access of women to health care, with specific actions to reduce geographical, social and economical barriers. Egypt plans to include a life cycle approach in health-care policies.

Ecuador plans legal reforms to ensure the timely flow of resources and to impose punishments for charging for free services. Ecuador will expand insurance coverage and Bahrain will improve quality of care and raise awareness of women's health. A number of countries reported plans to train and educate women and men on women's health. The Central African Republic plans to strengthen capacity and promote women's health, including male involvement.

752. Ireland's national health promotion strategy will aim to reduce smoking among young women; extend screening for breast and cervical cancer; address crisis pregnancy; continue to support female victims of domestic violence; and reduce cardiovascular disease among women. Kyrgyzstan will provide health education for women and girls to introduce the principle of personal responsibility for health. Suriname intends to reduce maternal and child mortality rates. Eritrea will intensify its work on reproductive health by specifically focusing on the fight against female genital mutilation/cutting, reducing mother and child mortality and actively engaging in combating HIV/AIDS.

D. Violence against women

753. Many countries indicated that effectively addressing the complex causes and consequences of violence against women and girls remains a priority. Numerous Governments plan to introduce new or strengthen existing legislation. Particular emphasis will be placed on enhancing provisions for victim protection, strengthening law enforcement and improving responsiveness of the criminal justice system. National strategies or plans of action will be major instruments for combating violence against women. Governments also intend to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive response to violence against women, including cooperation with NGOs. The Dominican Republic, for example, plans to bring together officials, representatives of civil society and technical staff to draft policies, plans and programmes against domestic violence. It also intends to establish regional and local networks to coordinate the work of the different bodies responsible for supporting victims of assault. China will further develop police mechanisms to accept complaints about domestic violence and protect women's legal rights.

754. Several countries intend to develop indicators, improve data collection or conduct research. Research in Ireland will assess why victims choose not to report violence to the police and why only a small percentage of reported cases result in a court hearing. Belgium will study early marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting.

755. Member States will undertake additional public education and awareness-raising activities, as well as efforts to sensitize members of parliament, decision makers, the judiciary, religious leaders, youth, NGOs, the media and community groups. Several States will include men in outreach activities, while others will support NGOs working on awareness-raising.

756. States will also ensure that support services are available. For instance, the Czech Republic intends to support municipalities in making available apartments for victims of domestic violence. The Swedish Government will finance protected housing and other services for young persons at risk from "honour" crimes.

757. Countries will continue to combat particular forms of violence against women, including female genital mutilation/cutting, sex selection and sexual harassment, and will address the needs of specific groups of women, including indigenous women and women from ethnic minorities. Canada will fund national initiatives to combat violence against women launched by aboriginal women's organizations.

E. Women and armed conflict

758. Some Member States will seek to increase the proportion of women in the armed forces, especially in peacekeeping operations. Denmark will develop training in diversity management for officers, which is expected to advance the use of non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce excessive military expenditures. Norway will enable men and women to combine a military career with family life. The Swedish Armed Forces, the National Service Administration and the Swedish National Defence College have been jointly instructed to develop gender-sensitive training in leadership for the military. New Zealand aims to achieve full integration of women into all services of its defence forces by 2005. Governments, including Norway, will continue to support gender balance in peace negotiations and in electoral commissions. The Netherlands will develop gender training and course material for military and police personnel who take part in military missions. Croatia will introduce a course on international humanitarian law in military schools.

759. Countries will continue to promote the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security at national level. Sweden plans to examine current national and international work to implement resolution 1325 (2000), with the aim of determining how Sweden can further strengthen work in this area.

F. Women and the economy

760. For several countries, increasing the number of women in the labour market is a priority for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, and a number of them are contemplating legislation and policies in this regard. Initiatives will focus on, inter alia: increasing women's participation at management levels; providing access to credit and financial resources; and providing employment insurance benefits. Some countries reported on their intention to increase educational and training opportunities to meet the demands of the knowledge-based economy and take measures to ensure greater attention to gender equality in the private sector. For example, as of 2005, companies in France will be able to exhibit a special "equality label" to show that they are committed to the advancement of women.

761. Poland intends to legislate against discrimination in employment and to eliminate gender-based segregation and segmentation of the labour market. In 2005, Andorra plans to carry out a survey to examine the causes of wage inequality and suggest measures to eliminate them. To increase women's participation in the labour force, Ireland intends to invest in a childcare infrastructure, building on its efforts since 1997, which have increased child benefits by over 200 per cent. Croatia will use existing legislation to improve the situation of women in the labour market.

762. Many countries will focus on women's entrepreneurship. Bahrain indicated that it would encourage and support women to manage small and medium-size businesses. Colombia intends to focus on job creation and will establish a women's fund from seed money provided by international cooperation. Seychelles plans to amplify microcredit facilities for women and encourage them to set up their own small and medium-size enterprises.

763. To eliminate occupational segregation, Member States intend to take action to eliminate gender wage gaps. They propose to broaden career prospects for women and girls by expanding opportunities for technical education and vocational training and for work in non-traditional sectors. Denmark plans to look at new sectors and types of jobs and the so-called "sliding" gender segregation, where women and men with the same qualifications and education end up in different jobs with different wages. In an effort to close the gender gap, the United Kingdom aims to have 40 per cent female representation on science, engineering and technology boards and councils by 2005, compared with 23 per cent in 2002. The Government will also work towards ensuring, by 2006, that 35 per cent of large organizations undertake pay reviews.

764. Some countries are planning to improve parental leave, create awareness among men about their responsibility to share tasks within the family and increase parents' access to childcare. Finland intends to influence attitudes in the workplace and to promote the right of men to take parental leave. Ireland plans to establish a committee to examine childcare arrangements for working parents.

G. Women in power and decision-making

765. Several countries reported that one of their main priorities was to increase participation of women at all levels of government, especially in executive bodies. Proposals include: amending existing legislation on political parties and elections to ensure women's representation; introducing quotas and temporary special measures; undertaking research studies on women in power and decision-making; training women for political and trade-union work; and providing leadership programmes for women to encourage their participation in leadership and decision-making positions. Australia intends to give attention as a priority to the underrepresentation of women in high-level decision-making positions, particularly in political and judicial systems.

766. States reported a number of measures they intend to take to improve monitoring of progress, including through improving statistics and indicators, setting benchmarks and ensuring regular reporting. Several countries proposed the establishment of concrete goals and targets or benchmarks for the increase of women's participation at the local, national, regional and international levels. Sweden will analyse the possibilities of regular, integrated reporting on the distribution of power between women and men in the different sectors of society.

767. A number of countries supported the introduction or wider application of quota systems and affirmative action programmes, accompanied by public awareness campaigns at the national and international levels. Brazil plans to expand affirmative action policies to reach beyond electoral quotas, working in collaboration with the political parties and the Office of the Public Prosecutor to strengthen the implementation of the policy on quotas. Paraguay indicated that

quota systems should be accompanied by incentive mechanisms, such as making State subsidies to political parties dependent on the number of women elected.

H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

768. In their responses, a number of Member States noted the need to build capacity for gender-sensitive planning and discussed plans towards this end. India, for example, intends to enhance efforts to develop and apply tools such as gender analysis of budgets, gender audits and gender-sensitive monitoring and planning at the national and local levels. Some countries also expressed their intent to apply a gender mainstreaming strategy more systematically, strengthen institutional mechanisms and improve coordination and collaboration in this area. In France, for example, the National Council for Gender Equality will bring together representatives of civil society, the private sector and government to discuss ways of enhancing implementation of gender mainstreaming.

769. Countries will take steps to strengthen policy frameworks and national mechanisms. Kyrgyzstan will provide gender training for all officials responsible for staff policy in the State administration system. Thailand will ensure that there are at least two officials working full time on gender issues in ministries and departments and that the Civil Service Commission recruits candidates with sound knowledge of gender issues to work in ministries and departments. The Dominican Republic will establish new offices for gender equality and development and strengthen existing ones. Slovakia proposes the establishment of a plenipotentiary for equal opportunities with a specific budget and a special ombudsperson's office for equal opportunities between women and men.

770. Thailand plans to provide gender-sensitivity training for finance and budget staff and introduce gender-sensitive budgeting at ministerial and departmental levels. Switzerland reported that gender-sensitive budgeting will be introduced as a planning tool; Honduras will create a specialized technical group on gender-sensitive budgeting in the Ministry of Finance; and Italy and Malawi plan to develop guidelines on gender-sensitive budgeting. Uganda plans to train planners and implementers to carry out effective gender analysis of sectoral and local government budgets.

771. Collecting, compiling and disseminating data disaggregated by sex was identified as a priority area for several countries. Proposed actions include: formation of databases; undertaking in-depth research, data collection and inventory of indicators; and the designation of officials working on collection of sex-disaggregated data and gender indicators in all ministries and departments.

772. Countries also reported on their intention to strengthen collaboration with NGOs. Effective project planning and implementation will be enhanced through capacity-building, including both the national machinery and civil society organizations in Brazil. In addition, expansion of consultation with and training/capacity-building for NGOs outside capital cities is planned in a number of countries.

I. Human rights of women

773. Governments reported their intention to draft or amend their constitutional and legislative provisions in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, other international human rights instruments and the Beijing Platform for Action. Countries planned to reform nationality, citizenship and personal status laws as well as family, penal and employment codes. Several countries will work for constitutional reform to bring domestic law in line with the Convention. Nepal is considering legislation to ensure safe migration and secure working conditions for migrant workers. Countries are developing or revising national plans of action to improve the status of women. Norway plans to incorporate the Convention into national law, giving it the same legal status as national laws.

774. Several Governments outlined plans to set up new mechanisms to monitor or follow up implementation of the Convention and the Platform for Action or to strengthen existing processes. Costa Rica plans an inter-institutional consultative commission to monitor recommendations by the Committee, while India intends to develop indicators to measure implementation of the Convention and the Platform for Action. A number of Governments noted that they were considering withdrawing reservations to the Convention. Chile will monitor progress towards ratification of the Optional Protocol.

775. Several Governments hope to further the training of public officials on women's human rights. Several Governments plan to disseminate the Convention and undertake advocacy efforts and awareness-raising campaigns, in some cases in collaboration with NGOs and other stakeholders.

J. Women and the media

776. To eliminate negative images of women in the media, some countries intend to take legislative, regulatory and administrative measures. Governments will encourage the media to challenge stereotypes and promote positive images of women in politics; promote increased representation of women in policy-making positions in the media; and improve media and public information on gender equality. Bahrain will encourage women's involvement in decision-making in media organizations.

777. A number of countries intend to take action on promoting a more positive role for media. A study in the United Kingdom will promote awareness of mass media's role in propagating positive gender roles. The findings will be used for gender sensitization, media literacy and education and training, as well as to provide activists with tools to urge more gender-sensitive communications policy and media reform. China will publicize and advocate for gender awareness among media workers, continue to monitor negative reports of women in the media, guide the development of gender awareness among the general public and provide gender sensitization training for media personnel. El Salvador will work on consciousness-raising workshops for media. Thailand will provide training for mass media on gender issues. Sweden will allocate financial resources to address sexual objectification of women in society as well as their exploitation in pornography.

K. Women and the environment

778. Countries indicated areas where future actions are needed, including: raising public awareness about environmentally sustainable development; improving access for women to environmental management skills; sensitizing technical staff in line ministries on gender perspectives in environmental issues; and providing better methodological tools for mainstreaming gender in the environment. Spain noted the need for gender-sensitive indicators and data disaggregated by sex, while China indicated the need to incorporate gender perspectives into environmental guidelines.

779. Some countries will take specific measures to ensure that gender concerns are reflected in environmental policy and programmes. Germany and Luxembourg propose to integrate a gender perspective systematically into sustainable development issues. Liberia will address major environmental concerns from a gender perspective, including the provision of safe drinking water; forest management; and the protection of biodiversity, including by providing training and reviewing legislation. The Government of Togo plans to provide subsidies for alternatives to wood as an energy source, including butane gas and solar energy, and to develop the wood-energy section for the production of timber for various uses, including firewood and charcoal. Eritrea will increase the participation of women in environmental work as well as introduce energy technologies aimed at reducing their burden.

780. Numerous Governments plan to take further action to promote women's active participation in decision-making. The Syrian Arab Republic will enhance women's awareness of environmental planning and impact assessments and will support NGOs to do research and environmental programmes.

L. The girl child

781. Member States will strengthen domestic legislation for full protection of the rights of the girls. Colombia is revising its minors' code to comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. South Africa is considering legislation to include trafficking of children among other sexual offences. The Democratic Republic of the Congo plans to: adopt a code on the protection of children; increase the age of marriage to 18 years; and introduce harsher punishments for rape and sexual abuse of girls in armed conflicts. The Government of Zambia is working with NGOs to introduce a new law for criminalizing child marriages and strengthening punishment for defilement of children, making it impossible for perpetrators of violence to negotiate with parents or other legal guardians of the victim. Swaziland plans to establish child-friendly courts for victims of child abuse.

782. Belgium will teach life skills and sexual and reproductive health education at school, while continuing to stress the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. The Democratic Republic of the Congo plans to strengthen the role of parents in ensuring their daughters' education. Nigeria reported plans to collect more sex- and age-disaggregated data to inform policy and programmes, in particular to address the causes and consequences of fistula and the situation of street children. Nigeria will conduct gender training for institutions responsible for gathering these statistics.

II. Other issues

A. Trafficking in women and girls

783. Member States reported a variety of measures they intend to take in the near future to combat human trafficking and the exploitation of prostitution. Major efforts are planned to formulate or implement national strategies or plans aimed at combating trafficking and/or the exploitation of prostitution. Finland is drafting an action plan for gender equality up to 2007, which includes programmes aimed at combating trafficking, and Guinea and Sweden will formulate national action plans specifically aimed at combating trafficking. Brazil will continue to develop activities under its national plan to combat child and youth sexual exploitation.

784. Several Member States intend to conduct research on trafficking. For instance, in 2004-2005 Sweden, with the financial support of the Nordic Council of Ministers, will carry out a survey of measures against trafficking in women in northern Sweden, Finland, Norway and the north-west part of the Russian Federation. Lithuania will undertake research and data-gathering on trafficking under its national programme on equal opportunities of women and men.

785. Additional awareness-raising initiatives include Canada's distribution of anti-trafficking posters through police stations, victims' services, community centres, refugee and immigrant centres and other places throughout the country as well as overseas. Others, including Germany, will introduce additional victim assistance and protection measures.

786. Some Member States acknowledged the need to monitor the impact of anti-trafficking measures. In 2005, the Netherlands will carry out a second evaluation of the 2003 amendment of its law on prostitution.

B. HIV/AIDS

787. A number of countries will take initiatives to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS. Initiatives will include national programmes to control the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS; and promoting safe and responsible sexual behaviour. Liberia will develop a revised multisectoral HIV/AIDS strategy and action plan, the implementation of which will be monitored by the National AIDS Commission. Malawi will mainstream HIV/AIDS in all sectoral programmes, with a focus on community-based interventions and ensure gender mainstreaming in all HIV/AIDS programmes.

788. Other initiatives reported included the plans of the Central African Republic to strengthen the multisectoral aspects of the fight against AIDS, promote change in social and sexual behaviour and enhance the capacities of households affected by HIV/AIDS, especially households headed by women, through income-generating activities and the social integration of orphans. Botswana will emphasize initiatives to prevent mother-to-child transmission through appropriate care and treatment. Since girls and women will increasingly be required to care for sick family members, efforts are planned to strengthen home-based and orphan care to ensure that girls can attend school.

C. Indigenous women

789. Several Governments intend to include components on indigenous women in future plans of action on advancement of women and gender equality. Several of these Governments also intend to incorporate the perspectives of indigenous women in general policy and legislative developments.

790. Several countries will empower indigenous women through development programmes, capacity-building projects and protection of their traditional rights to development. Similarly, the Bolivian Government's Agriculture Plan aims to enable rural and indigenous women to participate in decision-making on natural resource use and management. The Canadian Government will provide practical assistance to aboriginal women through the development and dissemination of an aboriginal women's business planning guide. Other countries will take steps to improve indigenous women's health. The impact of agricultural chemical products on the health of indigenous and farming women will also be assessed. Norway's resource centre for the rights of indigenous peoples is preparing to collect and disseminate data on indigenous women's rights.

D. Information and communication technologies

791. A number of Member States intend to take stronger action to improve women's access to ICT and their active involvement in the information society. Luxembourg, for example, will prepare a special action plan to strengthen women's participation in the information society, while the Islamic Republic of Iran plans to increase the number of ICT facilities accessible to women. Some Member States will elaborate or revise national ICT strategies to ensure the inclusion of gender concerns, as well as social aspects of ICT, and to include more women in decision-making. The Government of Cyprus, for example, will make stronger efforts to mainstream gender equality in ICT.

792. A number of Member States will set up institutions to promote progress in this area. Bahrain, for example, intends to establish a gender council on information technology.

E. Millennium Development Goals

793. Several countries intend to integrate gender perspectives into new national MDG policy frameworks. Bolivia intends to incorporate gender perspectives into its poverty reduction strategy paper. The Ministry of Education in Eritrea will encourage the increased participation of women in all educational and literacy programmes as follow-up to Goal 3 of the MDGs. The Government will also address the need for a more complete set of benchmarks and clearly defined targets in its forthcoming first national MDG report. Andorra made an undertaking to allocate 0.7 per cent of its total national budget for development cooperation by 2006.

F. Men and boys

794. A number of countries intend to enhance the critical role of men and boys for the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women. In Liechtenstein promoting the participation of men will continue to be a focus of promotion of gender equality, including through a travelling exhibition on "Family and Career in Balance". The Ministry of Gender Equality in the Republic of Korea will seek to forge a strong partnership with men, including by demonstrating that both men and women benefit from a gender-equal society. "Men and gender equality" is one of five identified areas of focus in Sweden's national gender equality plan.

795. In an effort to foster more gender-equal roles, Norway will increase the proportion of men working with children below age six to 20 per cent by 2007. Increased emphasis on gender sensitivity in childcare pedagogy is another element of Norway's plan of action. Denmark will work to give men a more prominent place in the overall gender equality debate and will focus special attention on men as fathers, while an NGO in Suriname has been requested to set up a research project on the role of men and boys.

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[2] *Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year, Mexico City, 19 June to 2 July 1975* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.1).

[3] *Report of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Copenhagen, 14 to 30 July 1980* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.80.IV.3 and corrigendum).

[4] *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15 to 26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10).

[5] These included the World Summit for Children (1990), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and the World Summit for Social Development (1995).

[6] General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex.

[7] General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.

[8] General Assembly resolution S-23/2, para. 9.

[9] Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/4.

[10] General Assembly resolution 57/270 B, para. 71.

[11] Economic and Social Council decision 2004/309.

[12] General Assembly resolution 58/148, para. 10.

[13] 70.16 per cent response rate. Annexes I and II provide information on the responses received from Member States and Observer Missions to the United Nations, including regional response rates.

[14] The Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific (June 1994); the regional Platform for Action — Women in a Changing World — Call for Action from an ECE Perspective (October 1994); the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005 (November 1994); the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001 (November 1994); and the African Platform for Action (November 1994).

[15] ESCAP convened a high-level meeting from 26 to 29 October 1999 in Bangkok; ECA convened the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women from 22 to 27 November 1999 in Addis Ababa; ESCWA convened the Arab Conference on Integrated Follow-up to Global Conferences from 29 November to 1 December 1999 in Beirut; ECE held the Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action from 19 to 21 January 2000 in Geneva; and ECLAC held the Eighth Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean from 8 to 10 February 2000 in Lima.

[16] *Report of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Copenhagen, 14-30 July 1980* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.80.IV.3 and corrigendum), chap. I, sect. A.

[17] *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

[18] General Assembly resolution 58/148.

[19] See General Assembly resolutions 51/69, 52/100, 53/120, 54/141, 55/71, 56/132, 57/182 and 58/148.

[20] Such as the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (1996); the World Food Summit (1996); the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 (1997); the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly — Population and Development on the overall review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1999); the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: World Summit for Social Development and Beyond (2000); the Millennium Summit (2000); the twenty-fifth special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (2001); the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (2001); the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS (2001); the International Conference on Financing for Development (2002); the Second World Assembly on Ageing (2002); the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children (2002); the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002); and the World Summit on the Information Society (2003).

[21] General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[22] Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/6.

[23] Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/4.

[24] See agreed conclusions 1996/2 of the Commission on the Status of Women, resolution 40/9 of the Commission on the Status of Women, Economic and Social Council resolutions 1997/17, 1998/12 and 1999/17.

[25] Such as the World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and the World Summit on the Information Society (2003).

[26] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 7* (E/1997/27), chap. I, sect. C.1.

[27] Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/12.

[28] Economic and Social Council resolution 2002/5.

[29] Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/44.

[30] General Assembly resolution 54/4, annex.

[31] E/2004/59, para. 71.

[32] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 10* (E/1998/30 and Corr.1), chap. I, sect. D, resolution 7/1.

[33] See ibid., *2001, Supplement No. 9* (E/2001/29), chap. I, sect. 3, decision 9/1.

[34] See ibid., *2002, Supplement No. 5* (E/2002/25 and Corr.1), chap. I, sect. B, resolution 2002/1.

[35] See S/PRST/2001/31 and S/PRST/2002/32.

[36] S/2002/1154.

[37] S/PRST/2004/40.

[38] The treaty bodies established under human rights instruments are: the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee against Torture and the Committee on Migrant Workers. The latter, the newest treaty body, established after the entry into force of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, on 1 July 2003, has not as yet considered reports of States parties.

[39] General Assembly resolution 51/68.

[40] General Assembly resolution 56/229.

[41] General Assembly resolution 48/183.

[42] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 6* (E/1996/26), chap. I, sect. C, resolution 40/9.

[43] General Assembly resolution 50/107.

[44] General Assembly resolution 52/193.

[45] Substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, 1999: high-level segment entitled "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women".

[46] Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/26.

[47] General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex, para. 10.

[48] General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[49] See Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/17.

[50] United Nations Population Fund, *Investing in People: National Progress in Implementing the ICPD Programme of Action 1994-2004* (New York, 2004).

[51] Demissie, M. and Lindtjorn, B., "Gender perspective in health: does it matter in tuberculosis control?", http://www.cih.uib.no/journals/EJHD/ejhdv17-no3/94%20Meaza%20Demissie.pdf.

[52] See World Health Organization, *Research on Reproductive Health at WHO* (Geneva, 2004).

[53] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), annex II, para. 113.

[54] General Assembly resolution 58/147.

[55] General Assembly resolution 58/185.

[56] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 4* (E/1994/24), chap. II, sect. A, resolution 1994/45. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences was extended by the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-ninth session in 2003 (resolution 2003/45).

[57] See E/CN.4/2003/75 and Corr.1 and Add.1-4.

[58] See decision No. 293/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council adopting a programme of community action (the Daphne programme) (2000 to 2003) on preventive measures to combat violence against children, young people and women.

[59] *Women, Peace and Security*, study submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.IV.1), see also S/2002/1154 and S/2004/814.

[60] See, most recently, the conviction, by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, on 17 June 2004, of Sylvestre Gacumbitsi of rape as a crime against humanity. Several earlier decisions of the International Tribunals of the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda on gender-related crimes were upheld on appeal.

[61] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[62] WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/5-E.

[63] TD/410.

[64] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 7* (E/1997/27), chap. I, sect. C, agreed conclusions 1997/2.

[65] General Assembly resolution 58/142.

[66] In Sri Lanka, both the President and the Prime Minister were women.

[67] See Deda, P. and Rubian, R., "Women and biodiversity: The long journey from users to policy-makers", *Natural Resources Forum*, Vol. 28 (2004).

[68] General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.

[69] General Assembly resolution 54/263, annex II.

[70] See International Labour Organization, *A Future without Child Labour*, global report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (Geneva, 2002).

[71] See Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *Facing the Future Together: Report of the Secretary-General's Task Force on Women, Girls and HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa* (South Africa, 2004).

[72] See 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/NHSDA/2k1NHSDA/vol1/toc.htm.

[73] See Kolomiyets, T. et al., *Global Child Labour Data Review: A gender perspective, Girl child labour studies*, Vol. 3 (ILO, Geneva, 2004).

[74] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 4* (E/1994/24 and corrigendum), chap. II, sect. A, resolution 1994/45. The mandate was extended by the Commission on Human Rights in 2003, at its fifty-ninth session in resolution 2003/45.

[75] Ibid., *1990, Supplement No. 2* (E/1990/22 and Corr.1), chap. II, sect. A, resolution 1990/68. The mandate was extended in 2004, by Economic and Social Council decision 2004/285.

[76] Ibid., *1999, Supplement No. 3* (E/1999/23), chap. II, sect. A, resolution 1999/44. The mandate was extended in 2002 by Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/62.

[77] Ibid., *2004, Supplement No. 3* (E/2004/23), chap. II, sect. A, decision 2004/110.

[78] See General Assembly resolution 55/25, annex II, article 3 (a).

[79] General Assembly resolution S-26/2.

[80] Organized by the Tamaynut Association and the Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples.

[81] Organized by the Asian Indigenous Women's Network and Tebtebba and hosted by Cordillera Women's Education and Resource Centre.

[82] Organized by the Initiative for Peace (IIP), in collaboration with the International Indigenous Women's Forum, the Continental Network of Indigenous Women and the Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation.

[83] Organized by the Centro de Culturas Indígenas de Perú and hosted by the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas.

[84] International Indigenous Women's Steering Committee on the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing +5).

[85] WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/4-E.

[86] WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/5-E.

[87] General Assembly resolution 55/2, para. 6.

[88] The Millennium Development Goals are: 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2. Achieve universal primary education; 3. Promote gender equality and empower women; 4. Reduce child mortality; 5. Improve maternal health; 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7. Ensure environmental sustainability; 8. Develop a global partnership for development.

[89] A/59/282 and Corr.1, paras. 55, 56 and 58.

[90] Argentina, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Fiji and Germany.

[91] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/57/38), para. 29.

[92] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 9, 1989.

Annex I

Replies to the questionnaire received by the Secretariat in 2004

February	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*
Barbados	Cameroon	Argentina	Azerbaijan	Algeria	Australia	Côte d'Ivoire	Benin	Andorra
Congo	Ethiopia	Belgium	Bahrain	Armenia	Brazil	Cyprus	Botswana	Angola
	Latvia	Bolivia	Belize	Austria	Czech Republic	Greece	Croatia	Democratic Republic of the Congo
	Uganda	Bulgaria	Central African Republic	Burkina Faso	Denmark	Kazakhstan	Eritrea	Gabon
		Chile	Chad	Canada	Djibouti	Malawi	India	Gambia
		Cuba	China	Costa Rica	Iceland	Norway	Israel	Georgia
		Dominica	Colombia	Egypt	Nepal	United Republic of Tanzania	Slovenia	Lesotho
		El Salvador	Comoros	Finland	Netherlands		South Africa	Madagascar
		Guatemala	Dominican Republic	Germany	Republic of Korea		United States of America	Mali
		Honduras	Ecuador	Ireland			Zimbabwe	Mozambique
		Indonesia	France	Italy				Niger
		Japan	Guinea	Kuwait				Nigeria
		Kyrgyzstan	Islamic Republic of Iran	Liechtenstein				Rwanda
		Malaysia	Iraq	Lithuania				Senegal
		Mauritania	Jordan	Luxembourg				Swaziland
		New Zealand	Kenya	Namibia				Zambia
		Palestine	Lebanon	Panama				
		Peru	Liberia	Paraguay				
		Philippines	Maldives	Sweden				
		Russian Federation	Malta	Switzerland				
		Seychelles	Mauritius	Syrian Arab Republic				
		Singapore	Mexico	Thailand				
		Slovakia	Morocco	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia				
		Spain	Nicaragua	Tunisia				
		Sudan	Oman	Venezuela				
		United Kingdom	Poland					
		Uruguay	Portugal					
		Viet Nam	*Puerto Rico*					
		Yemen	Qatar					
			Suriname					
			Togo					
			Turkey					
			Ukraine					
			Uzbekistan					

Annex II

Regional distribution rates of responses to the questionnaire

Economic Commission for Africa	*Economic Commission for Europe*	*Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean*	*Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*	*Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*
Algeria	Andorra	Argentina	Australia	Bahrain
Angola	Armenia	Barbados	China	Egypt
Benin	Austria	Belize	India	Iraq
Botswana	Azerbaijan	Bolivia	Indonesia	Jordan
Burkina Faso	Belgium	Brazil	Islamic Republic of Iran	Kuwait
Cameroon	Bulgaria	Chile	Japan	Lebanon
Central African Republic	Canada	Colombia	Malaysia	Oman
Chad	Croatia	Costa Rica	Maldives	Palestine
Comoros	Cyprus	Cuba	Nepal	Qatar
Congo	Czech Republic	Dominica	New Zealand	Syrian Arab Republic
Côte d'Ivoire	Denmark	Dominican Republic	Philippines	Yemen
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Finland	Ecuador	Republic of Korea	
Djibouti	France	El Salvador	Singapore	
Eritrea	Georgia	Guatemala	Thailand	
Ethiopia	Germany	Honduras	Viet Nam	
Gabon	Greece	Mexico		
Gambia	Iceland	Nicaragua		
Guinea	Ireland	Panama		
Kenya	Israel	Paraguay		
Lesotho	Italy	Peru		
Liberia	Kazakhstan	Suriname		
Madagascar	Kyrgyzstan	Uruguay		
Malawi	Latvia	Venezuela		
Mali	Liechtenstein			
Mauritania	Lithuania			
Mauritius	Luxembourg			
Morocco	Malta			
Mozambique	Netherlands			
Namibia	Norway			
Niger	Poland			
Nigeria	Portugal			
Rwanda	Russian Federation			
Senegal	Slovakia			
Seychelles	Slovenia			
South Africa	Spain			
Sudan	Sweden			
Swaziland	Switzerland			
Togo	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia			
Tunisia	Turkey			
Uganda	Ukraine			
United Republic of Tanzania	United Kingdom			
Zambia	United States of America			
Zimbabwe	Uzbekistan			
43/52	**43/55**	**23/33**	**15/39**	**11/13**